

Soft soap and hard fact

Pearl K. Bell

JAMES A. MICHERNER

Space
622pp. Secker and Warburg. £8.95.
0 436 27967 3

SIDNEY SHELDON

Master of the Game

495pp. Collins. £8.95.

0 00 222614 6

For some time now, something curious has been happening in the world of best-selling novels. Where once it was enough to tell a compelling story with little or no thought for journalistic accuracy or historical verification, popular novelists now feel they must display a prodigious zeal for research. They seem to be as much, or more, concerned with getting "reality" right as with making their fictional inventions interesting. Not only good bad books (that mischievous oxymoron of Chesterton's which Orwell made famous) but also bad bad books are shored up on all sides by a scaffolding of instructive information, attesting months and sometimes years of industrious preparation before a word is written. Whether it is Herman Wouk's two-volume romance of the Second World War, or James Clavell's chronicles of Old Japan and Hong Kong, or Arthur Hailey's sagas of the American automobile and aviation industries, this urge to inundate the reader with more than he needs to know has become a commonplace of best-sellerdom. One American reviewer swooned over *Master of the Game*, Judith Krantz's latest bundle of glitz, because while the writer "is ever-so-chic, she's also a dedicated researcher... bringing an authenticity to her settings that allows

a reader to inhale a lot of history along with the wine and roses."

By any measure of quantity or indefatigability - number of books, variety of subjects mastered, number of pages in each book, not to mention number of copies sold - the champion of the information-clogged docuroman must be James Michener. Whether he is fixing his sights on Israel or Colorado, Chesapeake Bay or Hawaii, the formula is unchanging: move slowly through thousands (or even millions) of years while pelting the reader with enlightening details (historical, geological, economic, and so on); weave all this diligently gathered data as melodramatically and sentimentally as possible into the lives of imaginary persons artfully contrived to point up significant aspects of Hawaiian, South African, etc. character, and make sure they play a prominent part in every big event of national destiny as it lumbers down "the long corridor of history". Michener never seems to quell before the panoramic immensity of his grand designs, which can begin (for example in *Centennial*) with dinosaurs and end with present-day farmers in Colorado. Moreover - and this is crucial to his remarkable popularity - Michener never ends his story on anything other than a comforting, if unjustified, note of hope. Even in *The Covenant*, despite the portent of disaster in his exhaustive survey of contemporary South Africa, he closes, if not with a synthetic happy ending, at least with the soothing promise of a brighter day to come. So much for sticking to the facts.

It was inevitable that at some time the corridor of history would begin to lose its splendour for Michener, and for his twenty million readers. Having squeezed all possible juice from time and its attendant facts, he has now taken off into space. Fresh from his conquest of South Africa, Michener

rolled his omnivorous research machine round to the US National Aeronautics and Space Administration, and has ground out a hefty volume about the rockets that made space flight, the moon landings, and interplanetary exploration possible. There is no single thread of plot in these 622 pages beyond the development of those rockets, though all the people involved in the great adventure provide an abundance of sub-plots, none of which is worth going into.

But the scheme of *Space* does not turn out to be different in any significant way from the old reliable Michener approach to history. Since he must at every point sound like an expert, as though he had in short order earned a fistful of PhDs in astrophysics, celestial mechanics and rocket engineering (God forbid he should sound like a mere novelist), the book is replete with diagrams, tables, equations, charts, and the recondite discourse of scientists. Lest the common reader panic, however, all the scientific stuff (it isn't going to hurt a bit, he seems to reassure us; it can even - dare one think it? - be skipped) is cushioned by the Human Dimension, as Michener draws us into the imagined lives of his customary assortment of representative men and women: six astronauts, two engineers (one German, who worked with Von Braun at the Nazis' experimental-rocket station on Peenemünde, one American), a sprinkling of politicians who hold the NASA purse-strings, and various loyal wives. Naturally all the astronauts are, in a favourite Michener encomium, "straight arrows", valiant and handsome and fond of proclaiming such virtues as "A human mind is limited only by the power it has at its command."

In his grim determination to do the job right - it's the vacuum-cleaner

school of fiction - Michener sucks everything under the sun, as well as the Sun (capitalized throughout), into his novel: science fiction, affirmative action (the search for a black astronaut), Carl Sagan, Freeman Dyson, and much, much more. This relentless thoroughness is obviously a strong part of his appeal. For it is clear, if hard to prove, that Michener is writing for the middlebrow multitudes who are interested not in art or in the writer's unique response to his subject, but in self-improvement. His readers want solid value for the money they've shelled out, as long as what they get isn't intellectually taxing. Eager for authentic information about a great moment of our time, they would rather not have to work hard at the task of satisfying their hunger. One has only to remember Tom Wolfe's brilliant and irreverent portraits, in *The Right Stuff*, of the first group of astronauts, human all too human, to balk at the bland nobility of Michener's stereotypes. And though Norman Mailer, in his quirky report on the first moon landing (*Of a Fire on the Moon*), was less concerned with Armstrong, Aldrin, and Collins than with firing fresh salvos in his unending war against technology, his astronauts have a much more vivid immediacy than Michener's. But this shrewd - and unquestionably sincere - compote of technology and lofty sentiment is precisely what Michener's readers want.

Even a junk-food specialist like Sidney Sheldon has not related the mania for research. In his latest blockbuster he offers us, along with old-fashioned courses in sex and garb, some quickie courses in South African history, diamond-prospecting and big business. There is even dialogue in Afrikaans to prove he (or someone) has done his homework. But Michener's devotees probably wouldn't be caught dead reading Sheldon, though the latter too, in his primitive fashion, dispenses potted information like alma to the needy. He has had the chutzpah to swipe his

title from Hesse, but all connection between Sheldon and literature stops right there. *Master of the Game* begins in South Africa in the 1880s and ends in Maine today; enough wickedness to keep a soap opera churning for weeks. Kate Blackwell, ruthless tycoon, has her father's diamond-and-gold empire into a global conglomerate that devours industries like a python. Kate devours people like a python. With her overflowing cheque-book and her thrilling repertoire of treachery, malice, and deceit, she moves down everyone who threatens her will and her power. Along the way we are entertained with attempted marriages, sadomasochism and other varieties of kinky sex, mostly violent, discreet, and of New York and Paris. There is barbecue, plastic surgery, and a few diversions. The dialogue is mainly of the he-snapped she-snapped persuasion, which can try, if not say, a reader's patience.

Kate Blackwell may be Sidney Sheldon's answer to J. R. R. Tolkien, though the campy wit that gleams through the ends of *Deliverance* is one of his talents. The real source of Sheldon's - so to speak - inspiration, suspect, are those Bette Davis films of the 1940s in which she played a consummate jezebel, as vicious as she is beautiful, a grand destroyer of family, home, and lovers until the last reel, when she gets her just desert. In those ancient days of the Hay Office, watchdog of movie morality, Kate Bette Davis was not allowed to get away with her crimes.

One can imagine the wheels turning as Sidney Sheldon sat down to his word processor: Bette Davis as Kate Blackwell, aged ninety, unrepentant and unpunished because such things (in fact all things) are no longer taken in Hollywood. Neither is Sheldon's undisguised admiration for his dear villainess. The trouble is that not even Bette Davis at the top of her game could make this hokum palatable.

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A radical and his roots

Julian Symons

LIVING HOWE

A Margin of Hope: An Intellectual Autobiography
352pp, Secker and Warburg, £10.
0 436 20202 6

"Don't you feel", John Berryman once asked Irving Howe, "that Rimbaud's chaos is central to your life?" He replied in the negative, as he had failed to share Delmore Schwartz's feeling that on some mornings he couldn't even bear to tie up his own shoelaces. Such expressions of preference for order over chaos, and of belief that he could manage the simple, practical affairs of life, made Howe an object of amused pity in those Princeton circles, "a nice fellow, but not one of the hooded victims". But he was not cast down. "Berryman might have Rimbaud and chaos, but I had Marx and history."

Marx and history, or one might say more exactly Trotsky and radical politics, have been the guidelines of Irving Howe's life. Novellists, poets and critics who have taken a dip into politics and found the water too hot or too cold are familiar, but Howe is something much rarer in the United States and almost unknown in Britain, a man primarily involved throughout much of his adult life with politics who has retained a deep interest in literary creation. It is true that his interest is chiefly in the social aspect of such creation. His fine short essays on Stendhal, Dostoevsky, Conrad, Turgenev and Henry James are included in a book rightly called *Politics and the Novel*. He remains, in that book and in his many articles on American and European (but rarely British) novelists, basically a political writer, feeling the need to adopt a stance that is not purely literary. The need extends beyond literature, to everything that concerns the United States, American entry into World War Two, McCarthyism, Vietnam...

more often than not Howe worries about the stance's correctness, but the need to have an opinion about everything is one he would never question. It is an opinion passionately held, and a serious difference with a friend is likely to lead at best to coolness, often to a severance of relations. Thus, after a public debate about Hannah Arendt's *Eichmann in Jerusalem* in which Howe opposed Arendt's thesis, he met her at a party and extended his hand. "With a curt shake of the head and that bold grin of hers, she turned on her heel and walked off." A typical British approach to cultural politics differs from that of the New York Jewish intellectuals. It is on a politeness, less noisy level of discourse. It is also much less frank.

The sub-title "an intellectual autobiography" is doubly justified. Howe is pleased and even proud to accept the label "intellectual", and the book is personal only about ideas, not about the author's personal life. It tells us that Howe was born in 1920, and brought up in the poor Jewish community that crowded the East Bronx, that his father's grocery store went bankrupt in 1930 and thereafter both his parents worked in the dress trade. There is a moving, candid account near the end of the son's feelings on his father's death. And that is all. We do not learn whether Irving Howe was an only child, his wife is no more than mentioned, and his son Nicholas appears on the last page. This is the life of an American radical, not of a husband or father.

Howe's later life and attitudes have been coloured by the fact that he entered the Trotskyist movement in his teens, remained active in it until called up in 1942 for Army service, and was a passive supporter for some years after the war was over. The movement at this time had, like most sectarian groups, a Left and a Right wing which split on the issue of the nature (in 1940) of the Russian state. Was it still a "workers' state" although a degen-

erate one, or had it moved into a phase of "bureaucratic collectivism", neither capitalist nor socialist? James P. Cannon, the Right-wing leader, was a power-politician who would have been perfectly at home in the Communist Party, from which indeed he had been expelled. His rival Max Schachtman was a brilliant speaker and polemicist. When Schachtman paid a brief, perhaps surreptitious, visit to England he impressed all those he met with his wit and quick-mindedness. When the split came the young Howe went off with Schachtman, and worked for the group's weekly paper, *Labour Action*. The Cannon rival paper was named *Militant*.

It is a tribute to Howe's narrative skill that he is able to make these manoeuvrings interesting, and to convey the nerve and excitement of a time when, for the young, everything seemed possible. CCNY, the City College of New York, was filled with Trotskyists in Alcove 1, a space "dark-stained, murky, shaped like a squat horsehoe, one of perhaps ten along the edge of the lunchroom". The more numerous Stalinists were nearby in Alcove 2, but it was in Alcove 1 that you could walk in at any time and find "an argument about the Russian Front in France, the New Deal in America, the civil war in Spain, the Five-Year Plan in Russia... here ideas simulated the color of reality, here we defended the 'correct line', that mystic pride of Marxism." Intellectual disciplines were strict, for in these years the American Trotskyist movement attracted many good minds. The argument between James Burnham and Trotsky about bureaucratic collectivism, carried on in the *Fourth International* and the *New Internationalist*, the movement's theoretical monthlies, was conducted on a high level. Trotsky's reply to Burnham (Trotsky supported the Cannonites) was called "From a Scratch to a Gangrene", a title felt to be justified when within a few months (not years, as is said here) Burnham

had propounded his theory of the managerial revolution. Howe does not overstate the case when he says that training in the movement "taught us to grasp the structure of an argument... to speak and think, and to value discipline of mind." Nothing similar could be said of the British Trotskyist movement, then or now.

It was a training that prepared the young Howe, after Army service where in Alaska he caught a glimpse of Dashiell Hammett, for entry into the literary world as critic and social commentator. Or rather, into the New York Jewish literary world, for in that place at that time it was positively an advantage to be a Jew, and conscious of it. The first literary article mentioned here is about a novel by Isaac Rosenfeld, in which Howe writes of a scene "that impinges upon my own life - as so many other Jewish readers will feel". A Jew was particularly in tune with this time, when many Americans were struggling to come to terms with the realities of the holocaust, and to understand its meaning. It was peculiarly difficult even for first-generation immigrants, brought up in a country where they believed that "here the Jews at least had a chance" to comprehend the concept of the holocaust, the deliberate design to kill every Jew who could be found. The need for "explanations" like Hannah Arendt's perverse and tortuous theory that the Jews collaborated in their own destruction, that (to overstate a little) they truly desired their own deaths, was strong, as it could never have been in Europe. It moved Howe to assert his solidarity with specifically Jewish literary traditions, and to collaborate in editing English translations of Jewish works. It moves him also to acceptance of the idea that something he vaguely calls radical evil exists in human nature. Such passages, uncharacteristically uncertain in tone, are among the weakest in the book. The radicalism Howe still retains does not permit consideration of the idea

that the message spelled out by the concentration camps is that the behaviour of human beings who possess complete power over others is almost never humane, and that any view of modern society should take account of this. Where concentration camps have been set up, where torture is practised as a matter of policy, there will be no lack of torturers. It is not too much reality that humankind is unable to bear, but too much freedom.

Howe lacked a degree, so that an academic post seemed out of his reach. He made a living post-war by writing for *Commentary*, for Dwight Macdonald's *Politics*, which was founded in 1944 and lasted five years until Macdonald found it drained his energies too much (or simply tired of it), for *Parade* Review, and, with some twinges of conscience, for *Time* which paid more than all the others put together for his occasional reviews. On *Politics* Howe did editorial chores, including a magazine chronicle under the name of Theodore Dryden, said to be a ferret-broeder from Long Island. He was paid \$15 a week, and found his editor "a hard boss, charmingly irascible, at once bright and allity". The silliness is easy to believe, given the variations and digressions of Macdonald's free-wheeling career, but it is not particularly true, and the portraits of other friends and acquaintances are also rather inadequate. Howe's turns of phrase are often forceful and vivid, but he lacks the capacity - or perhaps the desire - for revealing portraiture of physical appearance and habits. *Parade Review* paid almost as badly as *Politics* - Orwell got \$10 an article for most of his "London Letters" - but it was, Howe says, "the vibrant center of our intellectual life", and no doubt he would have been happy to write in it unimpeded.

He came to the magazine in the late 1940s, when the great years were over. For perhaps six years, from the end of 1937 onwards, *Parade Review* was a

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Up market in Manhattan

Michael Neve

DAVID ROSNER

A Once Charitable Enterprise: Hospitals and health care in Brooklyn and New York, 1885-1915. 234pp. Cambridge University Press. £20. 0 521 24217 7

The idea of history as a necessary moral lesson, in the high Victorian manner, or the idea of history as, in the end, a history of morality itself, is not a fashionable one. The hectoring tone that could be said to accompany such kinds of historical argumentation has been found both unappealing to the ear and sadly lacking in methodological sophistication. Instead, the Whigs have been trounced, the language of accusation has been dropped; the "past" has given way to "history", that open society where people, both the quick and the dead, speak freely and frankly. Questions of social morality and what they consist in are now left to philosophers, but even they seem chary of explicating moral issues with any certitude. We are assured that morality has a history, and warned to be careful of simplicities. Like Christianity, or utilitarianism, but the best are said to lack all conviction, while others recommend the bolt-hole of Benedictine-style retreats, to see out the Dark Ages of moral collapse.

In one field of historical endeavour—the history of medicine—this attempted separation of moral and descriptive languages seems particularly hard to manage, and for interesting reasons. A commitment to "neutral" medical history has not merely been difficult, but can often generate nothing less than bad history—the history with the anger left out. Given that most human cultures have failed to

produce environments where access to health and happiness are evenly distributed—at least as opportunities within the social order, the history of medicine could be said to be necessarily entangled with moral judgment, and with a methodology that must see the social/historical dimension not as an option, but as a core of a piece with the subject itself. In its great days in the early part of this century, the history of medicine was best practised by a distinguished group of scholars acutely aware of the proximity of medical history to the history of moral and political conduct. This legacy remains, and allows for the possibility that it is medical issues and medical fates that are the actual moral indices of a culture's priorities.

Enterprise is a restrained but firm example of this conjunction. At first glance, he may be praised, in the orthodox manner, for producing a highly professional, excellently researched piece of medical history. For his book is certainly that: full of graphs and tables, with a clearly expressed narrative to accompany them. Rosner has written a study of hospitals and health care in Brooklyn and New York in the turn of the century, and describes how access to health care changed in that time. The hospital system, at the beginning of this period, was based on charity, and on "neighbourhood accessibility". The degree of payment for care by patients was minimal. Under the impact of economic depression in the 1890s, the charity hospitals found themselves under enormous pressures to provide more than medical aid. Instead, they had to become shelters, providing them with the financial burden was overwhelming, and hospital trustees had to force patients out from the hospitals more rapidly, and deliberately attract fee-paying patients. Hospitals had to aspire to the

condition of hotels. Trustees also had to attract doctors to these newly privatizing places, because they would bring fee-paying patients with them. This proved to be a Trojan horse, since, replicating European battles much earlier in the century, the lay trustees would eventually lose managerial control to the doctors themselves.

The growth in importance of the hospital meant the subsequent withering away, not only of the principle of charity itself, but of smaller health-care institutions that might provide competition; the dispensaries particularly. Institutions such as Brooklyn City Dispensary, founded in the 1880s, had deteriorated into a dental clinic by 1920. Hospital-affiliated dispensaries survived, as "out-patient" clinics, because safely attached to the hospital, the true "mother-ship" of American culture. But independent facilities, accessible to the working class, perished. Nearly 100 dispensaries went out of existence, in New York and Brooklyn, in the last decade of the nineteenth century. In his chapter on the collapse of non-hospital-based medical services, Rosner has chronicled nothing less than the disappearance of the possibility of primary health care in modern New York.

For this is the true work of this book, that it is a careful contribution to the moral history of Manhattan, and of the degree of the segregation, based on race, class and wealth, that makes up so much of that story. Health care is seen, as it has to be, as dependent on stronger powers and struggles, and suffering at their hands: dependent on the struggle for property; on the growth of the suburbs; on the collapse of the charitable instinct in the face of commercial voracity. Rosner's argument is not facile: pockets of effective charity remain in practice in contemporary Manhattan, just as hospitals in the city can provide efficient services for (properly insured) persons. But Rosner has mapped the ending of a non-economically dependent health care system, and a tone of quiet anger at this historical outcome can be detected throughout the book.

One vivid story, from the power-grabbing "Progressive" era, concerns the fate of New York Hospital's Bloomingdale Insane Asylum. Unfortunately, from the point of view of real estate developers, this sat on the hospital's thirty-five acres of land between 110th and 120th Streets, on the expanding upper West Side. Under intense pressure from both political and commercial interests, the hospital governors moved the asylum out of sight, to White Plains, Westchester. Naturally, an exclusive interest was protected thereby, and Morningside Heights could become a WASP wedge, between Harlem (then Italian/Jewish) and other parts of the West Side, mostly Irish Catholic.

Rosner describes the way that the light touch that remains as a historical undercurrent throughout, reminding the reader also of the instrumentality of social distancing; the telephone, the subway, the telephone. That respect, system of medical aid based on charity is part of the story of American medicine itself; that it was charity that came closest to an ethical model, and one that did not last long. Here would be unfair, even though the model he has used can seem a little neat to portray the sad journey from the old *gemeinshaft* to the new *gesellschaft*. Without preaching, as written his contribution to the history of how Manhattan became both a city of immigrants, with, in medical terms, the inevitable effects on an ordinary people: "Just as New York was emerging as a working class city, its charity and health services began to turn away from the poor to remodel their services around the needs of wealthier clients." In medical history is revealed as the history. But given that Rosner himself teaches and lives in New York, one only hope that the social responsibility he implicitly calls for finds its response in the older, fairer-headed city that he has brought to life in his pages.

Stopping it hurting

J. F. Watkins

H. B. GIBSON

Pain and Its Conquest
224pp. Peter Owen. £10.95.
0 7206 0595 4

RONALD MELZACK and
PATRICK D. WALL

The Challenge of Pain
447pp. Penguin. £4.95.
0 14 08 0466 8

Pain and Its Conquest is a summary in about 200 pages of everything that is known about pain. The book will appeal not only to those professionally concerned with the management of pain, but also to those philosophers and poets who may need to grapple with the problem of pain. For example, H. B. Gibson quotes the barbarous opinion of C. S. Lewis that pain, even of a child, is a punishment for the sin of "choosing self for the centre", rather than God. True to his vocation as a detached psychologist, Gibson does not rage against this attitude, but suggests, with irony mild to the point of impenetrability, that the views of Camus on the matter, as expressed in *The Plague*, are "somewhat more humane".

Lewis's opinion has, of course, been a commonplace of Christian doctrine from the beginning, as Gibson points out in his excellent chapters on the historical background and the nature of pain. Paracelsus, it seems, early in the sixteenth century, had discovered ether and even suggested its use in the relief of pain, as an anaesthetic. Burying at the stake would have been beyond suggestion, to judge from the fact, in 1591, of the Edinburgh midwife Agnes Simpson, who tried simple herbal analgesics. Perhaps the most interesting aspect of pain has been the resistance of Christianity (partly under the influence of Galen) to any serious attempt to alleviate it. How is it that a religion professing love for humanity should have been so assiduous and arduous in devising ways of hurting people? The subject deserves a book to itself.

Women's pains in menstruation and childbirth were until recently another arena where cruelty and bigotry contended with reason. In a valuable chapter on this problem, Gibson notes that female dyspareunia, or painful intercourse, is discussed in the medical literature far more frequently than dysmenorrhoea. Can there be another index of male insensitivity to women's

problems? The opinion that dysmenorrhoea is a sign of a neurotic personality survives today only in the minds of a few elderly practitioners of medicine and perhaps some younger ones whose brains have been affected by over-indulgence in rugby football. The general opinion is that the condition is a physiological disturbance which will eventually yield to treatment.

The pains of childbirth, since Queen Victoria's heroic gesture, are no longer regarded as a punishment to be patiently endured, but they still present a problem. Are these pains "natural" or not? Gibson states that between seven and fourteen per cent of women experience no pain at all at parturition. Is there a psychological component in the pains of childbirth? The claims of enthusiasts for relaxation methods, such as Read's, or the Russian technique of psychoprophylaxis, with its roots in hypnosis and Pavlovian conditioning, suggest that there is. Gibson discusses, with some enthusiasm, an extraordinary approach to pain in general, and obstetric pain in particular, which he calls the "Epicurean" approach. The idea is to "oppose pain with positive feelings of pleasure", by, for example, using hypnotic suggestion to convert the pain of childbirth into a "sexual experience culminating in orgasm", or distracting the sufferer's attention from other forms of pain by swamping him with pleasant sensations. He quotes Robert Burton's observation that some physicians would supply a "beautiful young wench" and a "poison or two of good drink" as a remedy against pain. It's certainly worth a try, but one may wonder whether psychological methods of pain relief have come very far since the seventeenth century.

It is true, as Gibson writes on the penultimate page, that through intensive mental or physical activity we can "come to terms with pain", but coming to terms with it is not conquest. The main unconquered areas are in some forms of chronic pain, to which a chapter is devoted. Pain in the "phantom limb" of some amputees, or the inability to focalize a severe chronic pain in patients who have undergone removal of part of their cerebral cortex, suggest that the correct answer to the question "Where's the pain?" is "In my mind". Here we enter the mysterious region of pain considered as a mode of perception, where there are no satisfactory answers to all sorts of questions which spring up—questions like, "Would a hallucination of pain be a 'real' pain?"

Pain is a psychological problem as

much as a neuro-physiological one, and Gibson gives an excellent account of the contortions psychologists have suffered in considering the problem. Wyke, for example, has called pain "abnormal emotional need". Freudians declare that some pains "need" their pain. The "cultural therapist" Thomas Szasz appears to believe that patients with chronic pain have chosen to become "cultural deviants" because their careers have failed them.

The idea of pain as a state of consciousness rather than a sharp perception requiring pain receptors, pain nerves, and pain areas in the brain is part of the revolution in modern scientific thinking about pain. Another aspect is the "Gate Control Theory" of Patrick Wall and Ronald Melzack, whose book has been revised and published as *The Challenge of Pain*. This covers much the same ground as Gibson's book but will be more comprehensible to the non-scientist because of its less mellifluous style and its liberal use of colloquial language. It is chiefly notable, however, for its account of the theory and its development. Gibson states that before a stimulus is perceived as pain it must pass through control mechanisms, or gates, in the central nervous system. The gates are opened or closed by other impulses, some of which are pain impulses from the cerebral cortex. The theory is so obviously sensible and right that it is difficult to understand the resistance with which some authorities have attacked it. It provides simple explanations for much that is painful and paradoxical to the perception of pain. Even acupuncture, if it works at all, can be provided with a reasonable explanation.

Last Aid: The Medical Dimension of Nuclear War, containing thirty papers delivered to the First Conference of International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War, held in Washington DC to March 1981, is now published (336pp. £15.80). W. H. Freeman. £15.80. 0 7167 1434 5. Edited by Eric Chivian, Robert Jay Lifton and E. Mack, point out that the "nuclear war would result in death, injury, and disease, and natural catastrophe, or total annihilation." Papers deal with medical and environmental and consequences and the response to a possible nuclear conflict.

ROBERT NISBET

Prejudices: A Philosophical Dictionary
318pp. Harvard University Press. £12.25. 0 674 70065 1

Once upon a time a book of this nature would have carried some elegant title as *Conduct of Life*, or *Culture and Anarchy*, or *On Present Discontents*, or even, in words taken from a highly respected foreign tongue, *De Corpore Politico*, or *Sturm ohne Drang*. But these days books need either to deal with hobbies (including sex), or else to be seen to be improving (on sex, for instance). The word "Prejudices" may suggest a hobby (Build your own... How to enjoy...), while "Dictionary" certainly has an improving air about it, possibly enhanced by the ambiguous adjective "Philosophical".

In the event Robert Nisbet's book is a collection of solid mini-essays on (to put it mildly) vexed questions arranged in an alphabetical order. The author is not afraid of "prejudices": he has preferences and abhorrences, he considers some conditions better or worse than others, and he gives his reasons. It is only when disagreeing with him that one is tempted to fall back on that piece of misquoting or, more justly, when one comes up against an occasional lapse in imagination or a blotted spot contingent on strong, clear views. *Prejudices* is enormously well read and expertly written, as well as unusually handsome to the eye. So much so that a false accent on a French word comes as a distinct shock.

It perhaps a pity that the alphabet obliges Nisbet to begin with "Abortion", a question so truly vexed as (I suspect) to defy decent generalization. The surest sign of despotism in history is the state's suppression of the family's authority over its own. "It may be the principle of this declaration—the most potent principle of the book—that leads him to espouse the abortionist party as against the anti-abortionist. Abortion can hardly be acclaimed *en masse* because (for their own purposes) Nazi Germany, Fascist Italy and Russia both Tsarist and Stalinist were opposed to the practice. Moreover, Nisbet appeals too easily to "family authority" as if it were self-evidently bound to be noble and benign. (Surely bad parents antedate the welfare services.) In his habitual falter he invokes the "repugnant spectacle" of militant abortionists marching happily with "lesbians, homosexuals, and others whose interest in freedom is matched by a desire to vent punitive fury upon the family"; but he considers aggressive anti-abortionists the greater evil in that they strike at the very heart of individual as well as family rights.

No doubt one will be spewed out of every rational person's mouth for being rather hot nor cold, but "If all depends", one wants to murmur, at "Well, I would save the mother's life at the cost of the child's, but...". Abortion is at best a sorry thing, something which is sometimes necessary or advisable, but can be neither welcomed with open arms nor rejected out of hand. Nisbet's solicitude for family authority (whose particulars here) has induced him to take on an either/or stance. With due respect to clear thinking, there is a small emotional consideration which, though it may not sway us, must at least discount: anti-abortionists, whatever their reasoning, let live. We would not like to see the opposing principle achieve general acceptance.

It is the uses of the word "Alienation" that have alienated us from it. The same can be said of "Anomie", now a fancy name for doing one's own thing, out of boredom or (ignorance of) the way others have done things. The culture of narcissism (a result of highly specialized breeding) has been nicely observed by Christopher Lasch: individualism as a mass movement; Iona wolves moving in huge packs. Yet, Nisbet points out, under certain circumstances anomie can be "tonic rather than toxic": for one thing, "All creative work has a measure of anomie, for the absence of creativity is that the creator

The conservative contribution

D. J. Enright

move far enough away from one orthodoxy or conventionality... to have the feeling 'I am I' more strongly than he would were he still closely bound to *nomos*, to the body of the law, custom and convention. (Exceptions may prove the rule, but they also get in its way!) For that phenomenon we need another word than "anomie". If we found one it too would prove to have been besmirched by its usages; there's no such thing these days as a virgin word, or if there is, it must be quite egregiously unappealing.

Like Goethe's Mephistopheles who "tempts, excites and must, as Devil, create", "Atheism" can be a stimulant. More dangerous to religion is indifference—and the jaded (or else zealously ingratiating) erosion going on in the "secularist" churches whose current interests appear to be political or sociological rather than theological. "A religion that is not spiritually exacting and directed at the communicant's faith in God and sense of grace is (or at bottom a religion at all). There is (not can be) a community of belief in atheism, as more obviously in Marxism and Freudianism, which makes these something like religions; there is no sense of community, of shared endeavour, in indifference.

Good men, like this Albert Schweitzer Professor of the Humanities (Emertius), bring out the devil's advocate in less good men. (By the by, as an instance of "Covetousness" Nisbet cites a political scientist who was simultaneously Allison W. Scott Distinguished Service Research Professor and Director of the Miriam Angstrom Butler Institute for Political Analysis at one university and Elmer Crittenden Distinguished Professor and Director of the Mark J. Smith Center for the Study of Political Dynamics at another.) Hence I would wish to insinuate that indifference (and not merely in the matter of abortion) does have its negative virtues. It may not strive officiously or otherwise to keep alive, but neither does it kill; that is why we need whipping up by propaganda, flags and trumpets....

Under "Authoritarianism" fiction has often soared, "for one way to beat the government is by disguising a message in the plot and action of a novel, play, or short story". Writers had to take trouble (artistic liability) to disguise their message; also, they actually had a message. No authoritarianism, no message, no disguise—little art. Instead it all hangs out, and what hangs out is never of much interest. (See under "Boredom", one cause of which is security from predators.) But for censorship Milton would not have set down the ringing words of *Areopagitica*. In an efficiently totalitarian state, however, Milton wouldn't have lived to write *Pamphlets Lost*. Nisbet distinguishes between the two kinds thus: "Whereas in authoritarian society everything is permitted that is not explicitly forbidden, nothing is permitted in totalitarian society that is not explicitly authorized." Think there is a sacred borderland which takes in the sort of régime, whether you call it authoritarian or totalitarian, which cajoles, bullies and laughs writers into conformity or silence. Such countries are often materially prosperous (and hence to oo need of messages) and admired for their orderliness by those more liberal countries forced to pay the price of liberalism.

That kind of settled authoritarianism doesn't alide into totalitarianism because nobody is pushing it in any direction. An outstanding case of successful stasis is the Republic of Singapore; permanence can be ensured simply by cloning the prime minister. Totalitarianism, according to Nisbet, derives from the revolutionary destruction of authority. This grim thought is happily softened by his persuasion that "In the long run, authoritarian states are more stable than totalitarian ones because the latter have to keep on remaking human personality, remoulding homogeneity, generation after generation. It looks like another either/or, and no third alternative.

Fleeing from the A's, we find ourselves at "War". Which is hell, but... Most men lead lives of quiet desperation; and (according to Nisbet) many of them, desiring release from

the stupefying pressure of the mundane, would prefer noisy desperation. Nisbet himself, though, brings "well-favoured" (ie, not notably bored, not workless, or poor, or put-upon), found in the Second World War a sense of fulfillment not available in the groves of academe. War can also satisfy the "need for community". (His blue-eyed pets are fast becoming my *bêtes noires*.) Nisbet sounds more and more like Rupert Brooke in his 1914 sonnets, that classical account of noble war versus ignoble peace: "Now for the first time in their lives" men and women in huge numbers "were separated from the economic calculations, from competition so often unrelieved by love and friendship, and from the long literalness of civil society". War is good for progress, a great "nourisher of science and invention"; without it we should never have developed anaesthetics and antibiotics, nor invented the sewing-machine (thought up in France to produce uniforms at speed), nor the atomic bomb. (It has often been observed that war gave a great boost to protheists.) Also, war brings prosperity, both during and afterwards: it solved the Great Depression of the 1930s. Furthermore democracy itself is "the child of war", born along with the "socially levelled" infantry. In "Militarism", which sees martial law as the only answer to pervasive social nihilism and can only hope that somewhere or other mortal law will be palliated by "the memory of a democracy that worked", Nisbet quotes Napoleon's remark that "a marshal's baton lay in the knapsack of every soldier. Not every soldier managed to get his fingers round it, though.

What do we have nowadays? Not exactly Pacifism, which with some reason Nisbet sees as bearing much the same relationship to war as atheism bears to religion. No, merely passivity, a sense of futility, and the ever more substantial spectre of nuclear war (we can't afford a really big war; but those who died in "conventional" war couldn't afford that either, it cost them everything they had), and terrorism as "a devil's potpourri of ethnic, racial, mini-state, border, and guerrilla wars". Brooke wouldn't have thought much of such a prospect; it might even have reconciled him to the long literalness of civil society as well as "all the little emptiness of love".

But perhaps Nisbet is being witty about war? (In "Conservatism", possibly the saddest essay here, he opines that war can only enhance "the nation *encl indivisible*" at the expense of those Burkean "smaller patriotisms" and "subordinate loyalties" which he prizes as the molecular constituents of the social order.) He shows how risky Wit can be in the following and final entry. Somebody has described it as the only weapon with which one can stab oneself in the back; brevity may be its soul, but gravity is more soulful and enables you to rise higher in the world. In fact, as any dictionary of quotations will indicate, on no subject have wits been more biting than on wit. If Menckes hadn't been known as a humorist, Nisbet claims, he would have been recognized as a great erode. And "Adlai Stevenson is the candidate *par excellence* in the list of politicians who sank by their levity" while the relatively dour Eisenhower kept looking more and more responsible to the American people. I first read this as "for the American people" that would have been imprudently witty.

Nisbet is especially entertaining on "Reification", a process he defines as "the stealing of life from the individual and the co-opting in order to secure it in some ontological invertebrate"; which is not quite what it is meant to mean. It all began when the language of Goethe gave way to that of Hegel—green grew the golden tree of life grey—and then that of Marx. "It is one thing to mutiny against Captain Bligh, but for an honest-to-good revolution, a blob-like capitalism is necessary." We are told that to the nineteenth century the French, once so sharp and precise in their language, had acquired as many words ending in *time* as the Germans had *ismen*. But it is, structuralism that is "without question the opiate of the reifying classes"; for, varying the

metaphor, in the social sciences and humanities structures multiply both sexually and asexually. Risking witness, Nisbet declares that "structuralism is in fact the modern Slough of Respond"; well, it is so tiring to treat either people or poems as separate individuals, and we do have other things to do with our time.... (What?) The subject makes Nisbet as mad that even community gets lost—or rather, for the real offender is the spirit of egalitarianism, the "paste of abstraction known affectionately to oil centralizers and egalitarians as 'community'. That is, national 'community'. Incidentally isn't 'most astutious reifier' it turns people into things, often into paste-like abstractions.

Conservatism is embattled and wherever it looks it finds cause for dismay and exasperation, the more so when it looks with the eyes of an intellectual born before the death of Latin and Greek, even before the death of God, as intimate with the past as anyone can be without having lived in it, alienated (pardon!) from much of the present, and distressed for a future which may hold no memory of his dearest warnings. Nisbet's satire is of a scholarly cast, but it remains humorous as well as apposite, for example in remarking under "Humanities" (another good word gone to the dogs) that "there is, as a suffering world knows, good writing, bad writing, and creative writing", in proposing that what "Psychobiology" teaches us is that the Protestant Reformation was the outcome of "a young man's identity crisis in the sixteenth century"; and in relating the story, apropos of "Psychobabble", of the young woman who majored with honours in eco-feminism and set off for Washington, DC, confident that a good job awaited her in that centre of ecological and feminist lobbies—only to discover that even those lobbies required in their employees the ability to read, write, count, and in general beyond understanding. It must be his blend of gravitas and levitas, along with the relative brevitas of his bouts, that enables Robert Nisbet to preserve every appearance of sanity.

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Systematic savagery

James Joll

WOLFGANG J. MOMMSEN and
GERHARD HIRSCHFELD (Editors)
Social Protest, Violence and Terror in
Nineteenth and Twentieth Century
Europe
411pp. Macmillan. £20.
0 333 32002 6

One man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter; and at least two former members of the Nobel Peace Prize. Words such as social protest, violence and terror are so loosely used that it is valuable to have a series of historical case-studies dealing with movements which had very different aims but which had in common the use of violence to achieve them. This volume is the result of a conference organized by the German Historical Institute in London, and the twenty-two papers by German, Austrian, British and American historians are almost all of great interest and of a high scholarly standard. The book provides concrete examples to remind us that terrorism is not a new phenomenon peculiar to the second half of the twentieth century, as well as suggesting more precise ways of constructing a typology of terrorism and what the editors call "non-legal" violence than most of the many other books on the subject.

Historically these essays include a wide range of differing movements: outbreaks of violent protest in England and Germany in the first half of the nineteenth century, the Russian social revolutionaries, anarchists and separatists in Spain, syndicalists in France, the *squadristi* and storm

troopers of Fascism and National Socialism. They are introduced by an interesting discussion by Franklin Ford of what he calls the place of purposeful homicide in political history. Both he and Eric Hobsbawm in his comments on Ford's paper stress the new factors which make late twentieth-century terrorism different from that of earlier periods: for Ford these are principally the new technical possibilities available to the assassin in our own time, the publicity he can hope to obtain, but also the eclecticism of the ideologies which inspire him, "religious, pseudo-religious, libertarian, nihilistic, anti-colonial, Marxist... and at times... simply purgative for the individuals doing the deed". Hobsbawm suggests that any analysis of political violence needs to be wider in scope so as to account for the transition from the socially acceptable violence of eighteenth and early nineteenth-century England (Hobsbawm has elsewhere written of "collective bargaining by riot") and the characteristic twentieth-century phenomenon in which "the innocent... are the real and often intended victims." This was in fact the case in some earlier movements: the violent French anarchists of the late nineteenth century maintained, as an excuse for bombing a crowded café, that "il n'y a pas d'innocents", so that anyone who tolerated the existing state of society was a legitimate victim. The act of violence was more important than the consequences it was supposed to be bringing about, even though in practice, as Ulrich Linse points out in an interesting discussion of the difference between "propaganda by deed" and "direct action", the consequences of political assassinations were far more devastating for the anarchists themselves than for the

society against which they had been directed. In a concluding essay Wolfgang Mommesen distinguishes between terrorist movements in several ways, but firstly in terms of their ideological presuppositions: some (and many movements of the early industrial age belong to this category) look backwards to a lost time when the "good old laws" prevailed and traditional rights were respected; others look to the future and to a new utopian world to be called into being by the destruction of the old order. This is a useful classification for many spontaneous acts of protest, such as the movements described by Malcolm Thomis in his essay on the Sims and ideology of violent protest in Great Britain, 1880-48, or in Hans-Gerhard Husing's account of collective violent protest during the German *Vormärz*, but as Mommesen realizes, we need a more complicated model if we are also to include nationalist movements or Fascist movements for which, as Adrian Lyttelton says in his excellent discussion of Fascism and violence in post-war Italy, "violence was so inherent to the practice of the movement and so prominent in its ideology, that it cannot be treated as one aspect among others in the history of Fascism."

Two points emerge which are common to nearly all the movements discussed in this volume. Terrorism reminds the public, often in a most dramatic form, of the existence of the movements which practise it. "To attract the attention of the entire world, it is not itself a victory?" Plekhanov asked after the murder of the Tsar Alexander II in 1881, as Astrid von Borcke tells us in her study of the *Narodnaya Volya*. This often

gives the impression that a movement is much stronger than it is in fact, but it also demoralizes governments ("the present government must not be allowed a quiet moment", the Austrian Nazis, described by Gerhard Botz, asserted in 1932) and forces them to take offensive action which, terrorists often hope, will itself make liberal public opinion more sympathetic to their cause — an element in, for example, the strategy of the Basque ETA analysed by Gerhard Brunn. A tradition of terrorism keeps a cause alive both in the minds of its supporters and its opponents. Michael Laffan, in a lucid, balanced and perceptive account of the Irish Republican Brotherhood and its successor the IRA, shows how the Provisionals today are "unworthy heirs to an unbroken tradition going back to the mid-nineteenth century", and "however much ordinary Irishmen might disapprove of their actions, the mere fact that the Provisionals represent, however misguidedly, the present generation in the age-old fight against the British enemy has won them a certain sympathy."

This suggests that a distinction can be made between those movements which have a recognizable goal — national independence, the withdrawal of power in the state — and those which remain marginal with no clearly defined aim outside their own act of terrorism and the preservation of their own small groups. These groups have nothing to offer except ever more savage violence for its own sake and achieve little except to provide a minority with, as Mommesen remarks, their own quasi-religious behaviour patterns and an internal structure and ethical code often resembling that of extreme religious sects. Professor Mommesen and Dr Hirschfeld, by assembling scholars from different countries and from different generations, have provided an interesting and informative historical discussion of many forms of violent protest, but they have also reminded us of the difficulty and indeed danger of equating groups which have little in common with each other except the methods.

The frighteners

R. L. Clutterbuck

GRANT WARDLAW

Political Terrorism: Theory, tactics, and counter-measures.
215pp. Cambridge University Press.
£16.50 (paperback, £5.95).
0 521 25032 3

This is an outstanding book, a worthy successor to Paul Wilkinson's *Terrorism and the Liberal State*, containing a concise, comprehensive, sensible and liberal analysis of its subject. Its author, Grant Wardlaw, a psychologist by training and a criminologist by profession, and he brings a refreshing direct and jargon-free style of writing to a subject on which too much nonsense has been written in the past.

The first third of the book is about terrorism itself, the second two thirds about the response to it. Dr Wardlaw starts by giving a definition of terrorism and makes rather heavy weather of it. Can one really improve on the ancient Chinese proverb, "Kill one, frighten ten thousand"? He then traces the development of terrorism, by way of its changing purposes and strategies, to its modern forms and effects. He finds room for some intriguing sidelights — for example that in 1975 German terrorists obtained and threatened to release fifty-four litres of mustard gas in several cities; also the claim (quoting Walter Laqueur) that nineteenth-century terrorists, whether Russian, French or Irish, would not have stooped, like their twentieth-century successors, to abducting children. (He may be right, but medieval terrorists did so, and I would guess that from the days of civilization the tribal or village dissident cunningly discovered that the toughest of children would be more vulnerable to the abduction of his daughter or his son and heir than to a threat to his own life.)

In the main part of the book — on the response to terrorism — Wardlaw gives some excellent advice concerning the media, by assessing the damage they can do, wittingly or unwittingly, in putting innocent lives at risk. In tackling this problem there are grave dangers of hobnobbing one of the most vital safeguards of a liberal society — free investigative journalism — and the cure should lie in the profession enforcing its own ethical standards as doctors and the lawyers do. But, in an era of cut-throat competition, will journalists ever do it? Until they do, the danger will remain from what Wardlaw describes as "a symbiotic relationship." Terrorists and journalists are both in the business of attracting an audience so, albeit often reluctantly, the second may aid and abet the first.

Wardlaw has a useful chapter on the army, and the police, Australia and New Zealand (he is a New Zealander working in Australia) both follow the British way in crisis management, in

the training of police anti-terrorist squads and of their own SAS row squads, and in their proceeding to reaching the crucial decision to abandon negotiations and launch these highly professional soldiers. The moment must surely be when it becomes clear that the terrorists are going to kill a hostage unless they are killed first or, to put it another way, when the time has come for weapons to be used offensively to save innocent lives.

The most valuable chapter of all is *Political Terrorism* is on the legal regulation of terrorism. Nowhere have I read an analysis as good as Wardlaw's of the minefield of international conventions, conferences, etc. which have attempted (or, in the case of many UN members, pretended to attempt) to secure international cooperation against terrorism. No solution is remotely likely so long as governments continue to regard killing innocent people as an acceptable method of achieving their ends. It is not just terrorism, and if all countries undertook to be "extraordinary" or "provisional" anyone who committed it, surely, to judicial review is wholly resisted by government pressure. Nevertheless, these international conferences have not been entirely without value and have at least provided opportunities for sensible bilateral arrangements to be made in the lobbies in the face of the hypocritical speech-making.

The author's touch is less sure in domestic legislation. He talks of Germany and Great Britain as examples but his analysis here is rather naive. It is also a pity that he does not examine the impact of the terrorist package of 1974, which was in response to a horrific spate of criminal and political murder, abduction, and was consequently more draconian than the legislation in Britain and Germany. In all these countries the existing measures were not working and very little new evidence has been produced, in any book or elsewhere, to prove that the powers have been abused to the prejudice of the liberty of innocent citizens. My guess is that there will be very few such cases indeed; certainly not enough to challenge the justification of measures which have undoubtedly saved many lives.

Dr Wardlaw's chapter on intelligence is well laid out and reveals no secrets. It includes an interesting analysis of terrorist and indicators, and a useful section on technology terrorist attacks (nuclear, etc.) which for good reason is considered unlikely. It bases his analysis on good case studies, drawn from the experience of the American, British and the Dutch. He also includes a persuasive chapter on the findings of behavioural psychology, law-enforcement professionals, and may be sceptical about them.

Hospitable intentions

Terence Cave

THOMAS M. GREENE

The Light in Troy: Imitation and Discovery in Renaissance Poetry.
356pp. Yale University Press. £14.
0 300 02765 6

"Nabbia o polvere al vento, fuggo per gli non esser pellegrino": with some adjustment of context, Petrarch's image of flight, exile, and the desire for a new homeland could be read as an emblem of the pathos that besets the Renaissance activity of "imitation". The point will be made more explicitly by humanists such as Poliziano and Erasmus, who claim that the best way to imitate an ancient writer is to write for oneself and one's own times. Troy is burnt, the past is lost; there is no turning back.

The Light in Troy is a probing study of such tensions and paradoxes in both the Italian literary and the poetry of Renaissance Italy, France and England. Not the least of its merits is that it provides a conspectus of theories of imitation from ancient times to the sixteenth century: astonishingly, no one has so far attempted such a synthesis, although the topic is essential to the understanding of Renaissance literature and, as Thomas M. Greene points out, raises problems which underlie any diachronic study of literary texts. Those who are looking for a bread-and-butter guide to the subject will have to extract it from the discussion of imitative practice in which it is here embedded, and may be frustrated at times by changes of pace which give prominence to certain writers and periods and only allow a fleeting glance at others. They may

also feel that the express decision to avoid distinctions between imitation, paraphrase and translation (one might add commentary and compilation to the list) begs a number of important questions: imitation is in many cases constituted as a method of writing by its place in this range of options.

But this would be to ask for another book. The economy of *The Light in Troy* requires that the historical and theoretical thread be woven into a detailed analysis of individual poets (Petrarch, Poliziano, Ronsard, Du Bellay, Wyatt, Jonson) and individual poems. Greene's method of alternation between, and interpenetration of, the two levels is one with which I have a great deal of sympathy: he is right, surely, in his attempt to synthesize different kinds of approach to risk the occasional structural crack.

Four types of imitation are distinguished in an introductory chapter: the reproductive or sacramental, where a consecrated text is repeated without modification within the host-text as an act of homage; the eclectic or exploitative, which consists of a miscellany of allusions, echoes and quotations and is identifiable with the Renaissance principle of *contaminatio*; the heuristic, where the allusion is advertised in such a way as to draw attention to the gulf separating the subject from its host, thus provoking an insight into historical distance; and the dialectical, where the host exposes the vulnerability of its subject while at the same time exposing itself to the subject's potential aggression. It will be obvious that this taxonomy is designed to bring out the relative degree of tension or distance between the borrowed material and its new context: the last category, in which, as

Greene puts it, "The text is the locus of a struggle between two rhetorical or semiotic systems that are vulnerable to one another and whose conflict cannot easily be resolved", is the model for all the others.

It is also a model for Greene's method as a whole. Stressing the increasingly acute sense of anachronism which is a constitutive aspect of Renaissance humanism, he draws attention to the agonistic dialogue with the past which is implicit in the imitative poetry of the period. The predicament of the humanist is that he is faced with a corpus of mismatched writings, alien yet immensely powerful, accessible to newly-formed techniques of linguistic and philological enquiry yet tantalizingly obscure or corrupt. He works in the shadow of this heritage, sometimes filled with a sense of irremediable inferiority, sometimes asserting his own ability to exploit, to emulate, and even to go beyond its achievement. Greene draws out this agonistic leitmotif, "the light in Troy", as an emblem of both loss and illumination, as when he remarks that the growth of historicism faced Petrarch with "a daunting literary life by the dim brilliance of a vanishing city".

This is the core of the book's novelty, both in theme and in method. When Greene claims on the very first page that "we are not skilled in discussing imitative works as imitations", one might well be puzzled: for French literature, at least, one could cite the sensitive commentaries of Henri Weber, Dorothy Coleman, Mary McKinley and others. But Greene's approach is the first to deal systematically with the conflicts, the

dialectic of imitative texts, rather than making the assumption of a creative synthesis between imitator and model. His coinage, "subreading", engenders a new perspective: the reading he aims at is one which is aware of the archaeology of a text and of the accommodations — often aggressive ones — between its different strata. Hence, in turn, another dominant metaphor of the book: the writing of a humanist text is an act of necromancy, culling forth from entombment the shadows of a remote past and endowing them with a new and changed life. Poliziano's obsession with physical and textual dismemberment and, still more, Du Bellay's sonnets on the ruins of Rome provide paradigms of these themes and their textual embodiment.

There are many powerful moments in Greene's study of individual poets: he brings out, for example, the relative lack of tension in Ronsard's exploitation of subtexts, his preference for a kind of free-wheeling *vagabondage*; he stresses the ways in which Du Bellay and Wyatt achieve some degree of detachment in their perception of temporal or semiotic mutability; and he appreciates the robust maturity of Ben Jonson's concern with "the exercise of bridging a rupture and playing with the differences between the separated worlds".

But, inevitably, the three chapters on Petrarch form the centre of the book and the best case for Greene's approach. His view is one of deep fascination and attraction but also a kind of repulsion. He sees Petrarch's sensibility as torn between the synchronic security of the medieval imagination (represented by his interlinear glosses on Virgil's first eclogue) and that fearsome vision of the road that leads away from Troy. The vernacular poetry, according to this analysis, enacts a conflict between the serenity of its classical subtexts and its own "lapsarian insecurity", a fall from Virgilian poise into unresolved oxymoron. In a sense, Greene is simply restating here the well-known interplay of classical and Augustinian elements in Petrarch's imagination, but he restates it in a form that bears directly on the rhetoric and structure of the poems. Although at times the subreadings may seem almost to invent the intertextual drama rather than merely to analyse it, one cannot feel to be impressed by the virtuosic discussion of Petrarch's play on the connotations of the word *curator*, or by the analysis of *Rime* 128 as an implied meditation on "the loss of ancient plenitude".

The central problem of these chapters arises not from an occasional solicitation of the text (no literary critic can escape that accusation) but from the notion of an "ontology of selfhood" which Greene takes to

be the key issue in Petrarch's confrontation with alien models. It is undeniable that certain humanists and post-humanists — Petrarch, Erasmus and Montaigne are the most striking examples — begin to derive from their sense of the otherness of classical writings a corresponding sense of their own identity. But to render Petrarch's "quidam suum ac proprium" by phrases such as "innermost being" or "the essential core of selfhood" is dangerously anachronistic, especially as Greene seems at times to lapse into the highly questionable assumption that this essential Petrarchen self precedes the dialogue with ancient texts, rather than being its product.

The uncertainty is crucial, since it really matters whether we are talking here about the gradual formation of one of the most powerful myths of modern sensibility or about the quality of an author's supposed state of mind. In the end, I think it is the latter — what one might call the pathology of imitation — that interests Greene. From this side of the Atlantic, it looks very much as if he is himself grappling with the anxiety of Harold Blom's influence, seeking to displace it by using phrases like "the anxiety of originality" or by emphasizing the overcoming of anxiety. Positive values mean a great deal to him. The phrase "moral style" is a recurrent one, and there is an assumption (despite occasional disclaimers) that the acquisition of a historical sense is an emergence into sanity and balance: the good poems are the ones that display awareness of the conflict between surface text and subtext (what a pity that Ronsard "failed to understand the problematic character of creative imagination" represented by his interlinear glosses on Virgil's first eclogue) and that fearsome vision of the road that leads away from Troy.

Many critical approaches, from an Empsonian awareness of the way words can reverberate to deconstruction in the style of Paul de Man, "complex imputation", as Greene conceives it, is a kind of rhetorical deconstruction. One of the great strengths of the book, making it (almost) impregnable against attack from a restrictively post-structuralist angle, is its critical self-awareness. Greene admits that he is as much a prisoner of anachronism as his poets and humanists; that our etiological myths of the Renaissance are pieced together from fragments of humanist etiology and that we ourselves are thus engaged in a kind of necromancy, where the ghosts come out of their graves in anamorphically modern gear. Precisely because it is so successful in articulating the problems of humanist *imitatio*, this study illustrates with especial force the inevitability of anachronism in literary history and criticism.

Command behaviour

Geoffrey Best

WILLIAM H. MCNEILL

The Pursuit of Power: Technology, Armed Force, and Society since
A.D. 1000
405pp. Oxford: Blackwell. £15.
0 631 13134 5

The pioneer steam-engine manufacturer's boast to the visiting monarch that he sold what all men desired — power — comes immediately to mind reading William H. McNeill's book, for the grand theme is the mastering role in history of armed force in mutually fruitful relations with technological, commercial and industrial development.

The idea in its simple self, of course, is not new, but the breadth and gusto with which Professor McNeill has elaborated and presented it is quite breathtaking. Anyone who has read him before knows that he is accustomed to think big. A man who has written *Rise of the Human Community*, called *Rise of the West* and not only got away with it but won acclaim and prizes is out of the class of most of us monographers and essayists. With spacious vision he marks and meets the destinies of dynasts and democrats in a manner more than somewhat reminiscent of Arnold Toynbee, from whom some influence is unmistakable and may naturally date from when they were working together at Chatham House in the later 1940s.

McNeill's books to an unusual extent are parts of one grand concept, each dovetailing into the others already in the book. To the most ambitious, *Rise of the West* (1963), have now been added detailed studies of *Inner Asia*, the two determinants of which ultimately explain it all. *Plagues and Peoples* (1977) spotlighted that side of what he takes to be fundamentally important: demographic change. *The Pursuit of Power*, carefully mindful of demography, is about what seem to him no less determinant: the sharp end: war and the men and means of war, what war has done in and to history, and what it will do to humanity in time to come.

So there is a sort of philosophy of history here as well as a fine display of

behaviour" would reassert itself as industrial and (necessarily) bureaucratic power-conscious States organized society in the only way the ultimate requirements and necessities of war allowed. Not proletarianism or military revolution would settle the post-bourgeois phase of human history. The "market" phase, itself never absolutely markety and with the "command" principle repeatedly trumping, was in the long run no more than "an eccentric departure" from that norm. It has come back over us in strong waves since the 1880s (McNeill makes a challenging bid for the establishment of the world's first real military-industrial complex in Britain in 1884). We are all firmly in the grip of it now, and so far as we can judge, for all time to come — unless of course we blow ourselves up first, a possibility he does not entirely discount. The blowing-up will occur, he expects, unless a transition can be made "from a system of states to a single world government". A two-page conclusion takes the optimistic line in a fantasy of what the historian of 2500 AD might be able to record as he sits listening to the hymns of the military technocrats in the temple of the global Leviathan.

So slight, so short an ending seems perfunctory compared with the richness of learning and astuteness of thought of the earlier chapters, and it has to be said that the book fills out towards the end. Even McNeill, it appears, has managed no better than most of us the problem of getting his own generation into perspective. The thinning-out begins about the 1930s. The 1940s GI has actually been of more value to the historian of the reform of Maurice de Nassau and Helmuth von Moltke Sr than to the analyst of the contemporary warfare. State he now finds himself inhibiting. It is therefore worth remarking in conclusion that where McNeill rather peters out, a good book published last year takes over: Maurice Pearson's *The Knowledgeable State*. From an account of the modern industrialization of war which has much in common with McNeill's more richly historical one, Pearson launches into a more searching exposé of the nature and needs of the military-industrial State. If we don't understand how we all came to be in the howls of such a Leviathan-Behemoth, it won't be such a fault.

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behaviour" would reassert itself as industrial and (necessarily) bureaucratic power-conscious States organized society in the only way the ultimate requirements and necessities of war allowed. Not proletarianism or military revolution would settle the post-bourgeois phase of human history. The "market" phase, itself never absolutely markety and with the "command" principle repeatedly trumping, was in the long run no more than "an eccentric departure" from that norm. It has come back over us in strong waves since the 1880s (McNeill makes a challenging bid for the establishment of the world's first real military-industrial complex in Britain in 1884). We are all firmly in the grip of it now, and so far as we can judge, for all time to come — unless of course we blow ourselves up first, a possibility he does not entirely discount. The blowing-up will occur, he expects, unless a transition can be made "from a system of states to a single world government". A two-page conclusion takes the optimistic line in a fantasy of what the historian of 2500 AD might be able to record as he sits listening to the hymns of the military technocrats in the temple of the global Leviathan.

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Protestant designs

Sarah Wintle

GEORGIA B. CHRISTOPHER

Milton and the Science of the Saints
264pp. Guildford: Princeton
University Press. £16.50.
0 691 06508 8

JOHN N. KING

English Reformation Literature: The Tudor Origins of the Protestant Tradition
339pp. Guildford: Princeton
University Press. £25.
0 691 06502 0

Protestantism, in its earlier forms at least, was a pugnacious and combative religion, and its literature had no doubts about the desirability of having palpable designs upon its readers. Georgia B. Christopher quotes Luther, "As soon as the Word of God appears the devil becomes angry", and Calvin, "There is always a battle with the Word of God." Her book is concerned to fight through the smoke of battle to the way in which Milton's design illuminates God's word. John King's book focuses on the literature of the reign of Edward VI. This literature, which is largely polemical in intent, is seen by King as laying the foundations of that Protestant tradition of writing which culminates in Milton.

King's writing of Protector Somerset's activities as literary patron, makes the point that Somerset permitted greater freedom of speech and publication than at any point prior to that period between the opening of the Long Parliament in November 1640 and its issuance of the licensing order of 14 June 1643.

Protestant pugnaciousness from John Bale to John Milton is a claim for, as well as a result of, a liberty of speech which is thought vital because of an unshakeable belief in the primacy of the Word and words about the Word.

Professor Christopher sees Milton's poems as essentially works about Adam and Eve's consciousness of God's Word, and she is able to use this Protestant emphasis to positive literary effect. Her book, in outline at least, is boldy simple. The science of

the Saints" is that articulated by Luther and Calvin, and she offers a reading of four major poems — *Comus*, *Paradise Lost*, *Paradise Regained* and *Samson Agonistes* — in the light of the two reformers' "theology of the Word". Their status as heroic originators means that they convey particularly well "the sense of excitement, even numinosity, in reading sacred texts". In short, their work is used as the work of critical theorists, rather than as historical sources or as key texts in the history of ideas.

The book attempts to reconstruct Milton's fit audience's "structure of apprehension", its ready consciousness, and thus draws attention to how the poems are written so as to deepen and enliven that consciousness, just as the two reformers saw the understanding of the faithful moved and deepened by a proper reading of the Bible. While Christopher has some good things to say about all the poems, it is the central chapters on *Paradise Lost* that are the most stimulating and various.

The epic, it is argued, is built round a series of epiphanic moments, when heavenly and earthly perspectives coincide, or when all aspects of God's word — as report, as act, as promise — come together and so bind past present and future. Such moments are elusive within the poem and their potential is realized differently on different readings. Although this idea, as pursued by Christopher, does offer a sensitive account of what it is like to read and re-read the poem, it might have been more helpful if she had been more open about the similarities and differences between her approach and those of other devotees of reader-response theory.

The main strength of the book, though, lies in the way it explores the poems as dramas of consciousness, not only for their readers, but also for their protagonists. No more than the reader can Adam be a "heretic in the truth", and both are impelled not only towards an awareness of wider doctrinal truths. Many interesting things are said about Adam and Eve's consciousness of God's Word, and she is able to use this Protestant emphasis to positive literary effect. Her book, in outline at least, is boldy simple. The science of

it is proposed, following a comment of Luther, that her fault is too great a use of her reason in adding detail to God's commands. Adam, in contrast, by accepting considerations of pleasure before those of efficiency rests rightly — for a brief moment — in his unmerited but God-given freedom to enjoy.

Inevitably, as this example shows, such arguments about a correct doctrinal consciousness are most exposed by Milton's dislikeable God, with whom both the Devil and the reader are only too inclined to become angry. It is one of the virtues of this book that it gives us glimpses of what it might be like to read *Paradise Lost* with the eye of faith; such glimpses correspond with the poem's epiphanic moments. None the less the argument also implies that in this poem the combativeness of Protestantism is neatly projected onto God's opponents. Professor Christopher, in a quiet way, has written a suitably provocative book.

In order to write his book, Professor King has read a great deal of not very good writing, and he has not always asked of it the kind of question that might make it interesting. Too often the file-cards can be heard rustling, and the book's very real information as regards particular writers is not deployed so as to illuminate the book's larger theme.

King has divided his material into two sections, "The Reformation Background" and "Literature during the English Reformation", of which the first treating of questions of patronage, the book trade, the place of the arts of the court of Edward VI, and Biblical translations, is the more interesting. The second section examines figures like Robert Crowley, editor of *Piers Plowman*, and William Baldwin, a satirist for whom unconvincedly high claims are made. The Protestant use of medieval texts is an important topic, but the book's rather unexamined notions of literary influence, and its use of orthodox critical categories more usefully applied to more conventionally valuable texts, means that the issues raised are not fully explored. None the less the book does provide a broad comprehensive survey of what was written during the English Reformation.

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commentary



"King Lear" by James Barry. From the exhibition reviewed on the facing page. This was the only lithograph Barry made, and specimens of Polyautography in which it appeared in 1803 marked the first extensive use of lithography as an artistic medium. Barry here adapted the figure of the king from his painting "King Lear Weeping Over the Body of Cordelia", 1786-87.

Anglo-Saxon platitudes

Stephen Pickles

EMMANUEL CHABRIER

Gwendoline
Bloomsbury Theatre

Emmanuel Chabrier was the composer of *Souvenirs de Munich*, some pretty quasi-quadrilles for piano duet, in which the "Liebestod" becomes a parlor prank, along with other hallowed leitmotifs. In *Gwendoline*, however, his admiration for Wagner is serious without swamping his own invention. There are Wagnerian colours in the orchestration; in the second act love-duet, harmony and gentle rhythmic pulsing recall specific moments in the second act of *Tristan*. Chabrier's use of clarinets is especially suggestive, and the harmonic cast of the prelude to Act Two might be Mahler or Sibelius. Yet the overwhelming impression is of that particular kind of lyrical gravity which is of the essence of French nineteenth-century music. There is especially grandeur and sustaining intensity in the choruses, which are strongly and often beautifully sung by the University College Opera Chorus, in this first British production of the work.

The silliness of the piece comes not from Chabrier but from his librettist, Catulle Mendès. The story itself would make one nervous of staging the opera: peaceful Saxons versus marauding Danes; Gwendoline, a Saxon beauty,

daughter of the chieftain; Harold, an uncouth invader who has never seen a woman (despite one's suspicion that he has raped several hundred); love at first sight, epithalamion, and then the Saxons' vengeance on the celebrating unarmed Danes. The lovers die in each other's arms, leaning against a tree-trunk, and allouetted against a symbolic sunset – the Valhalla that awaits them.

French is perhaps too mellifluous a language for such strong stuff. When Gwendoline gives Harold the dagger with which she had been supposed to kill him, what else can he say but "Merci"? Late nineteenth-century manners are rather refined in an eighteenth-century fur-clad duet, despite his conversion by feminine beauty. Alexander Gauld's pronunciation occasionally suggests that Gwendoline has not had time to teach him all she would have liked. Yet he sings a very "racing" role with stinging forthrightness in the low notes as well as in the many high ones. Gwendoline is affecting sung by Juliet Oppenheimer. Her soprano has an appropriately French *timbre*, and is strong enough to sustain the higher register in the role, against remarkable orchestral odds. At times Hugh Hetherington sounds rather tired but he is sufficiently dignified as Arnel the Saxon chieftain to support the filmier qualities of the libretto. In the minor roles, James Murray and Simon Penbridge sing and act with keen conviction.

The production itself is spirited and energetic. Several difficult moments might have been more thoughtfully staged. Gwendoline rushes around too much whenever her troubled dream of the Danish invasion recurs. Focusing her anxieties more, and letting the orchestra depict their turbulence, would have given her character greater stature. The chorus want discretion in the over-zealous battle-scenes, and the producer, Michael Worlton, would have done better to solve rather than to reveal these problems. Sarah-Jane McClelland, his designer, has mere success with necessary economy. Though the overture could have been tougher, the achievement of the conductor, Christopher Fifield, and his orchestra is very fine given the demands of the score, and the circumstances under which such university productions take place.

The deep influence of Chabrier's music on Ravel – especially its hispanicism, and the *Valses Romantiques* and *Musette* Pompeux which the younger composer orchestrated in 1915 – is one of the elements traced in *Maurice Ravel, Variations on His Life and Work* by H. H. Stuckens-Schmidt, which has just been re-issued in paperback (272pp, John Calder, £4.55, 0 7145 0025 9).

Down among the dead

Peter Kemp

Arena: Burroughs
BBC2

"In the US," William Burroughs once said, "you have to be a deviant or exist in dreary boredom." *Arena's* profile of him showed that it's possible to be a deviant and exist in dreary boredom. Despite its jumble of variegated scenes – presumably a homage to Burroughs's fictional procedures – the programme seems lapsed into monotony. Like its addict author, it returned fixatedly to the same points.

Scenes from Burroughs's life and extracts from his novels emphasized that he has long been possessed by a fear of being taken over. Keeping detached in his main preoccupation. Born into a wealthy suburb, he was reared amid affluent respectability. His school subscribed to a robustly wholesome ethos of fresh air and exercise. Here, though, he nursed a guilty secret: a diary into which he poured deft effusions about a young chum. And homosexuality, it seems, has remained a worry for him. "We are a precarious minority," he abruptly insisted. "We got to fight for our lives." Besieged by conventional youth, Burroughs appears to have spent most of his life barricading his autonomy. "Hell," he has said, "consists of falling into enemy hands." Fantasies about encroachment fill his fiction: forces of repression snoop and prey, aliens try to infiltrate human bodies, surgery assaults and rearranges people. In life, too, Burroughs stays ferociously on his guard. Filmed in his windowless bunker in the Bowery, he toyed tremulously with the armoury he

heard to fight off attack – a gun, a blackjack with a razor, a menacing dagger.

Slicing into things, of course, is a Burroughs speciality. Like most of his traits, it seems to spring from an urge to slash out at conformity. His cut-up technique – pages chopped in half and randomly re-shuffled – sabotages customary patterns. His narratives deliberately burst fictional conventions: structure is ruptured and content bittily tugged around – just as bodies are in the many surgical operations his pages bloodily itemize.

Burroughs decisively severed connection with his background by joining the Beat writers. Involvement with Kerouac and Ginsberg showed him the way to cut loose. Liberated into drug-dependence, he settled into a very self-entranced world. Cruelly, the programme exhumed a few survivors from that period to reminisce retardingly about the Bohemian high-jinks that ensued. Terry Southern crowded with mirth over a drunken driving trip to Mexico. Ginsberg and Burroughs creakily re-enacted a juvenile party-piece. A more grisly prank was also recalled: the drunken game of "William Tell" that ended with the woman Burroughs then lived with, Jean Adams, being shot through the forehead by him. She was "sort of like using him to get her off the earth," Ginsberg explained, adding that the experience gave Burroughs "a taste of mortality." Not so stiff a dose as it dished out to Joan, of course. And, in any case, it hardly seems to have sobered him. Pistol-practice was a favourite pastime when he moved on to Tangier. Film of his son Billy eloquently testified to a continuing ability to damage those within domestic range.

An alcoholic junkie, now dead from a failed liver transplant, Billy had problems from the start. His nervous system, Ginsberg believed, had been "fouled up" by the amphetamines he had munched down while pregnant with him. As a child he received sporadic signs of recognition from his distant dad – the odd plaster cast of skull or a copy of Rimbaud when he reached puberty. Despite this, he seems to have retained a pulsing desire to establish contact. In one scene, pudgy and puzzled, he floundered fiercely in his father's presence. Showing signs of terminal distress, he was advised by Burroughs to try for a job as a dishwasher at "that greasy food restaurant," while Burroughs, the young secretary-companion lamented that, as "an extremely competent, accomplished person," he could only be "a living reproach" to Billy. It's Billy, you'd feel, who is the living reproach to Burroughs. But Burroughs looked unlikely to let it in that way. Encoiled in an impermeable carapace of cynicism, he was clearly achieving his aim of staying self-contained. "Dead people," he intoned in a apocryphally paranoiac style, "are frightening than live ones." Dead people, this programme suggested, are the most frightening of all.

With William Burroughs, *A Rage from the Bunker* by Victor Bockris (250pp, Vermilion, £5.95, 0 8150591 7) collects a number of conversations with the writer and his friends – among them Terry Southern, Andy Warhol, Susan Sontag and Allen Ginsberg – over the last 35 years. The subjects addressed include writing, dreams, drugs, music, politics, interviews and sex.

The end of exploration

Richard Combs

Identification of a Woman
Camden Plaza

The final images of *Identification of a Woman* take us a long way from the kind of dooms usually associated with Michelangelo Antonioni. A specialist asteroid – or, as the film-maker hero describes it, the unknown is as an asteroid – sails off into just as prettily coloured a vision of the cosmos, where man will learn "how the universe is made and the cause of things." To which the nephew responds, "And then...?" It is as neat and in a subtitled film – as verbally poignant a summation as one could hope for; it is also funny, which is characteristic of this film but again out of key with Antonioni's image. Even when everything has been explained, the need for stiles, for adventures, will not be satisfied; film director Nicolò (Tomas Millar) has to remember that his job is not to explore but to narrate.

More than this, Nicolò even comes to feel the futility of exploring. Towards the end, he apologizes to one of the women who have been co-opted in his quest to identify "the" woman. The exploration of the unknown is nothing, it seems, compared with the Sphinx-like mystery of the known world. "While we talk the world changes," Nicolò says to a man who seems to be his script collaborator, "becoming ever more impenetrable." In his efforts to define what his next film will be about – "a feeling with feminine contours" – Nicolò has pasted various photographs on a noticeboard, a collage attempt at identifying the "ideal woman". One of these shows a pair of lovers who were terrorists, whose romantic identity was, frighteningly clear in their ideology, the normal relationship that's tough.

It is a director's solution – on just such a normal (ie indefinable) relationship.

The toughest thing to define about *Identification of a Woman* is why this restatement of what Antonioni has essentially been saying since 1960 should seem so vibrant and inventive – possibly the most intellectually and aesthetically sparkling of all his films. Part of the explanation lies in the film's leonine humour, during off the cobwebs of 1960s alienation, which was first first to be Antonioni's brave subject and then itself a feature of his glacial style. *Identification* bristles with symptoms of alienation, except that in bristling it also generates something positive, a certain warmth that one might also not have expected. In turn, the explanation for this may be that Antonioni has put more of himself into the picture, portraying himself in Nicolò, the author in search of a subject, and his regular script-writer Teunisse Guerra in the man with whom Nicolò jokes about the changing world that remains closed to them. He also pokes fun at the implacable seriousness of his own image.

The film is fired by a basic contradiction in mood, a sense of alienation within engagement. Its settings have the seductiveness of local observation, filmed in Rome and taking in a spectrum of high and low life, fringe and dropout culture, and some mercurial details of apartment living. It begins with Nicolò returning with his now ex-wife. He describes her as a fearful woman who left with her fear but left behind the alarm – a walling device which Nicolò triggers while trying to get into the apartment. Once inside, Nicolò makes use of a walkie-talkie, and naturally has recourse to that arch device of communication-as-insulation, the answering machine. The trappings of his life suggest the paranoia of a detective movie, particularly a 1950s Cold War classic like *Kiss Me Deadly*, the hysteria of which is controlled by Antonioni's coolness. But both the private-eye format and the political connotations of that film are soon picked up here. By telephone, Nicolò appears to meet a girl, Mavi (Daniela Silverio), who comes from the rich and powerful end of the spectrum, who has

a strongly important, protective father, and with whom Nicolò has feelings which threaten, followed by a plotted against.

But Mavi is the closest Nicolò comes to finding the personification of what he is trying to express in an enigmatic project. When he subsequently disappears, he leaves a message against Nicolò, and it is through the detective work of another woman, Ida (Christine Boisson), that he eventually traces her. The visual clarity in *Time* magazine, in which he has featured as a representative of "Europe's Women Today", another version of the ideal that he seeks in Nicolò. By now, the local observation of *Identification of a Woman* has taken on much of Antonioni's mysticism. The search for Mavi is the "lost woman" of *L'Avventura*, and the ambiguities of perception of Nicolò – the photographs Nicolò scrutinizes for some clue to his own intentions – are compounded with meaning and confusion (footsteps in the fog, Nicolò becomes lost on a road, read).

The remoteness of Nicolò's life might also suggest Monica, who is more than one candidate for the position here. Ida is an actress, the opposite end of the social spectrum from Mavi, and with a warmth that dissolves at least one of the things that makes Mavi so ideal. She tells Nicolò, "I don't know what you are looking for, but I am looking for you." It is Nicolò's misfortune, perhaps, that he doesn't recognize his life in this girl Friday, although what he ends takes it out of Nicolò's orbit. The fact that she represents the great unknownable to Antonioni's youth. Not the past, but the future, generation is a foreign country to Antonioni's hero – and Mavi is a thing that he does differently (much talk of "masculine" and "feminine" living with another "woman" wonder he is left at the end of the film, turning his future film into a journey to the outer limits).

Self-portraits

Marc Jordan

James Barry: The Artist as Hero
Tate Gallery

James Barry (1741-1806) was undoubtedly a "case." The inflated value he put on himself as a painter and the stance of embattled genius which he adopted still loom over any assessment of what he achieved. His personality has come to seem more interesting than his art and this difficult, obsessive man has been co-opted by the twentieth century as a Romantic avant-garde figure. "The Artist as Hero," Barry's own implicit estimation of himself, is the subtitle of the catalogue William L. Pressly has written to go with his selection of Barry's work (167pp, Tate Gallery, £4.50, 0 905005 09 0).

Barry's life history does indeed read like the textbook case of the alienated (and alienating) Romantic artist. An Irish Catholic, he was taken up by Edmund Burke who encouraged his burning passion to revive history painting as an exalted moral and political force. Burke, who remained a remarkably good friend and mentor despite all Barry's ungratefulness, picked him off to Rome, where he soon quarrelled with everyone who might have helped him in his career and began suffering from the paranoid delusions which amounted to dementia by the end of his life. After he returned to London in 1771 his output was small. Most of what survives is shown at the Tate. He worried and nagged at the same themes for years. Where wiser men, some of them better painters, listened to Reynolds's lectures on the Grand Style and quietly got on with the less exalted genres of painting which are the glory of eighteenth-century British art, Barry refused to compromise. He turned down several commissions because the would-be patrons wanted their pictures done smaller than a whole wall. He eventually got the chance to do this in six monumental canvases for the Society of Arts illustrating the compendious theme *The Progress of Human Culture* (these are too big to move but can be seen at the SA on Monday afternoons from 1.00 to 5.00 until March 14). But he only got the commission, which he worked on for eight years, by offering his services for no money. He led a life of great poverty and self-imposed isolation during the production of his *megnum opus* and never got over the coolness of the reception the public gave it. Barry's *Allegory of Painting* at the Royal Academy in 1782. But his self-destructive behaviour eventually led to

the martyrdom he seemed to be seeking when he became the only academician ever to be expelled (for his slanders against other members). In his later years of bitterness and disappointment he rarely left his dilapidated house off Oxford Street where he lived in fear of a murderous plot by his ex-colleagues. He painted very little, but his closely-written commonplace book is a pathetic reminder of the stream of publications and letters in which he attacked the indifference of British patrons to high art and explained his own failure in terms of hostile plots and cabals.

After all this it is not surprising to discover that the subject which most engaged Barry was himself. His most successful pictures, a handful of them masterpieces, are either self-portraits or pictures which are in some less direct way autobiographical. The best of these lie outside the strict confines of the "Grand Style" either because they are portraits or because they are subject pictures conceived as small-scale illustrations.

The series of self-portraits collected at the Tate is a moving document of aspiration and disappointment. The young Barry appears most heroically with Burke in the early canvas "Ulysses and a Companion fleeing from Polyphemus". Its curious *mise-en-scène* is much more than a conceit and strongly suggests occult meanings. The disturbing intensity of this image continues undiminished through a series of roles cast by Barry for himself. He is by turns the heroic victim of envy and the lonely martyr until at last this eighteenth-century Passion ends with an "Ecce Homo" as the naked man is revealed in two drawings of unforgettable sadness.

In much the same way that Barry turned himself into drama he came to inhabit some of his own subject pictures. The superior energy of these images stands out immediately. Thus Philoctetes, in a series of increasingly dark etchings, becomes the artist cast out by society, his hideous wound the stigma of genius. Another outcast hero, Lear, weeps and gestures across a canvas nine feet by twelve with all the exaggerated fury of a Klemke or a Macready. Yet the final effect is impressively close to the sublime. Mere impressive still, precisely because telescoped into an area of a few square inches, are the illustrations to *Pericles Lost* which made such an impression on Blake. Barry's Satan, a heretic individualist confronting the oppressive hierarchy of Heaven, is the most complete sublimation of Barry's sense of himself into his art. These engravings, together with the self-portraits, are the living part of Barry's effort.

But Barry's *œuvre* is very uneven. High ambition and a belief in a heroic



James Barry's "Self-Portrait, a sketch", c. 1780, from the exhibition reviewed here.

destiny are not enough to make a great painter. Put in context, *The Progress of Human Culture* is the most impressive achievement of the Grand Style in Britain in the eighteenth century. Yet it is almost completely devoid of painterly qualities – a fact which is clear enough even from the photographs and engravings at the Tate.

It is disappointing that Pressly's catalogue does not confront the problems raised by so comprehensive a show where images of intense energy hang side by side with paintings of such flatness. Barry seems to have lacked the finer edge of intelligence, and he certainly lacked a sense of humour. His canvases constantly teeter on the brink of the absurd. Even Rubens would have steered clear of an allegory that put Drake, Raleigh, Captain Cook and Dr Burney up to their waists in the Thames with a party of naked tritons and nereids. Unlike Copley, Barry hardly tried to develop a modern heroic idiom. And unlike David, whose role as painter-legislator of the French Revolution he so much envied, he could rarely put his moral and political statements into Classical dress with conviction.

Too many of Barry's pictures are vitiated by a lack of courage in

execution to match the leftiness of their ambition. He drew feebly on a large scale, reproducing the graceful filled flesh typical of the English Neo-Classicalists. In the "Jupiter and Juno on Mount Ida" (the only erotic nude in the show), he is moving towards an abstract patterning of anatomy which calls to mind Ingres. But we experience the entwined lines of the torsos not as fluidity but simply as bad drawing. Likewise, Barry eschewed sumptuous colour, presumably for the usual Classicist reasons, but he did not have the courage to use the staid and exciting disharmonies of his French contemporaries. Instead he painted in the fuscous tones recommended by Burke in his *Essay on the Sublime*.

The Tate gives us all the contradictory evidence of Barry's major surviving works to draw our conclusions from. But William Pressly's catalogue too easily acquiesces in the idea that anything less than a Romantic genius will be as. If French Revolution he so much envied, he could rarely put his moral and political statements into Classical dress with conviction.

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Oxford University Press

Brotherly love

Harold Hobson

Peter Gill

Kick for Touch
Cottesloe Theatre

Peter Gill's *Kick for Touch* is so emotional experience, not an exercise in piecing together the odds and ends of a puzzle, as many people have thought. It is so to be apprehended by the intellect. Its shifts in time; the appearance and disappearance of characters – who, over the course of the play, are the suggestion of a marriage – which have been consumed and broken; the early absorption in argument about Rugby (Kenneth Cranham) and Jim (James Hazeldine), who sit at opposite ends of a table in a bare room, with a football ball in a bare room, with a woman, Ellice (Jane Lapotnik), sitting between them; even their exact relationships – all these are matters which if the audience troubles about them during the progress of the play, they are more likely to produce an impatient headache than aesthetic pleasure. The play's effect depends largely on the free-ranging associations and memories the audience brings to it. One of its effects was great; it grows greater with every moment of subsequent reflection.

Between the two men, who are almost certainly brothers, there are frustrated friendship, affection and jealousy. These are manifest in their early squabbles over football (who has been selected to play, and who hasn't) and they are more powerful still in their arguments over the woman. She is married to Joe when the play opens, married to Joe when the play opens, married to Joe when the play opens, married to Joe when the play opens.

Joe is the rougher, the more passionate, the less agile in brain, and the richer in family affection of the brothers. He does not see his young son, and in the midst of emotional turmoil, is anxious about his health, about his meals, about every aspect of his well-being. "Let him go," says Ellice desperately. But she is thinking, not of the boy, but of Jim, for she is aware of the danger to come. Jim does not go, and later there is another catastrophe, a terrible and bloody catastrophe. "There is no God," cries Ellice, and then "Nothing happened. I tell you,

nothing happened." But the second child is born, and the first child is dead. It is a cruel irony, the wonder of which is that it is Jim's. It is Jim's life right. That is one of the few points on which the audience can have no doubts. And Joe, beyond all control, cries out about blood, streams of blood, staining the carpet, and about his taking the mangled body into his own bed. "I wish," says Ellice (and we almost freeze), "I wish it had been the other." There is a fight between the brothers, and as they lie locked together, motionless, perhaps dead, on the floor, Ellice (the sole person in the play to have physically left the stage at any time) reappears, holding a young boy by one hand, and with a baby ever her shoulder. There is no mark of blood anywhere; but the boy's face has a look of horror and fear, and we remember that Greek tragedy abhors the overt sign of violence. Its murders, as narrated, are seen.

What is haunting about *Kick for Touch* is that, with only one change of gear, it passes from the utmost banality into the terror of ancient Greece. Gill marks the moment of change as

Oxford 12.50

American notes

Christopher Hitchens

There is a concept, not peculiar to America but somehow special to it, which defines whether a topic or a person is chic or controversial or otherwise worthy of note. The media vanguard for this concept is "visibility". Visibility is, naturally, variable to the point of fickleness. Noam Chomsky, say, used to be highly visible but now is not. Norman Mailer and Gore Vidal have it while John Cheever, I think, did not. To be "visible" figure or an issue need not be popular or in vogue. It is possible to be quite *démodé* (like Elizabeth Taylor) but still to be instantly recognizable even after prolonged absence from the centre stage. Those without visibility are said to wish that they possessed it. Some who have it wonder how they acquired it. A few wish they could lose it. Among the most last category must be Susan Sontag.

She brings out the best in people. Only counting the last two months, she has been savaged in a long piece in *Harper's* magazine and ridiculed by senior columnists for merely attending in Paris congress sponsored by the French Ministry of Culture. The critical attack, written by one Marvin Minkoff of the University of California, lampooned her efforts on behalf of Roland Barthes, and scorned her Cagney-like essay on the sounds made by silence. It made sport of her affection for Oscar Wilde's idea of style. It also referred to her throughout as "Susie Creamcheese". This, for the uninitiated, is an American schoolyard vulgarity ("Creamcheese" spreads so easily) suggestive of looseness more than style. It is hard to think offhand of a male author of similar stature who need not, in fact, be too solemn in overhearing a public in this way. One need not, in fact, be too solemn in overhearing a public. This latest spite of spite comes just as the echoes of the last row die away. Ms Sontag scandalized much of New York last spring by comparing General Jaruzelski to a fascist - a remark which could only really be

criticized for its want of originality. Underneath all the taunting on that occasion was the definite (but deniable) suggestion that a woman was somehow speaking beyond her competence.

As for the Paris meeting, it hardly seems odd - since she lives there for part of each year and has served almost as an official greeter for French writing in the United States - that she would attend a banquet for intellectuals held in that city. Yet down again came a hail of contumely - including almost a whole column in the *Washington Post*. Mere gallantry compels me to say that all this is very strange.

This being the country of the future, it has been decided to experience 1984 one year early. The literary press is full of Orwell assessments; all of them written with the impending date as their theme and some of them presumably published in case anybody else had the same idea and pre-empted the competition. Irving Howe has written gravely about collectivism in *The New Republic*; the *Village Voice* has reprinted Sir Victor Pritchett's original 1948 review; it has been alleged that Orwell liked most of his plot from Evelyn Waugh's *Brideshead Revisited* and gored by the mighty Norman Podhoretz in a public exchange over whether Orwell, had he lived, would or would not have metamorphosed into a conservative. Re-reading the collected works for the above-mentioned purpose, I found two things that one wishes had happened and one corking tale about American publishing. The two regrets are that Orwell never finished his review of *Brideshead Revisited* and that Albert Camus never turned up for their projected meeting at the Café Deux Magots. The corking story, which comes in a letter to Leonard Moore, is best recounted in Orwell's own words:

I'm not sure whether one can count on the American public grasping

what it is about. You may remember that the Dial Press had been asking me for some time for a manuscript, but when I sent the MS of *Animal Farm* in 1944 they returned it, saying shortly that "it was impossible to sell animal stories in the USA".

Dispirited authors up against know-all publishers should, I feel, have this clipping pasted in their hats.

Of the making of jokes about differences between American and British speech, there is no end. Many of the best-known anecdotes are simplistic and unsatisfactory because they rely on straight double entendre or upon the old gag about our different understanding of the expression "knocked out". Edmund Fawcett's and Tony Thomas's book *America, Americans* (reviewed by Anthony Quinton in the *TLS*, January 28) is praiseworthy in many ways, not least for giving what is arguably the definitive account of the Great Anglo-American Linguistic Philosophy Incident. The story, which circulates in a number of versions, concerns a lecture given by J. L. Austin at Columbia University. In a slightly maddening fashion, the old maestro was illustrating that the double negative construction in English ("He did not say nothing") entails an affirmative statement ("He did say something"). How curious it was, he droned, that there was no equal and opposite formation whereby a double affirmative might result in a negative. Sidney Morgenbesser, a fine philosopher, a good man and one used to the rhythm of New York speech, put it all in his debt at that moment by interjecting a flawless taxi-driver's "Yeah, yeah" and thus affirming the negation of the negation.

Every time I read a thumb-sucking article about how, in the United States, the printed word is on the point of

being overwhelmed by television, cable and video, I close my eyes and remember all those boring theses about the imminent death of the novel. Another means of refuting this witless "long term analysis and projection" is to try and count the number of extant literary and generalist magazines. It's like being trapped in Borges's infinite library. For a start, almost every university has one, and they provide tremendous opportunities for getting on the record. Debates that kindle and flash in the grand public prints very often go underground, like a smouldering fire in a seam of coal, only to re-ignite in some far-off quarterly. Professor Frank Kermode has, I see, chosen this means of replying to Dame Helen Gardner. For the benefit of those who do not receive *Raritan*, published four times a year by Rutgers University, here is the juice. Professor Kermode was, it will be recalled, given a mentee or two in Dame Helen's Norton Lectures at Harvard in 1979-80; lectures which he had himself delivered two years earlier. Her subsequent book, *In Defence of the Imagination*, which was based on the lectures, was similarly unearring about Professor Kermode's *The Genesis of Secrecy*. Here is the flavour of his reply:

Dame Helen thinks modern literary criticism is in a bad way and, however sadly, attributes a surprisingly large part of the blame to me. I too think literary criticism is ailing but suppose that a more accurate diagnosis might be had from an examination of bar Norton Lectures than of mine.

The "suppose" is very well placed there. But the Kermode doctrine of proportion is not always so judiciously sustained. He manages to compare Dame Helen's allies and arguments with Hitler and with Stalin. In case I'm suspected of exaggeration, let me quote. In an attack on the pro-Gardner Howard Erskine-Hill, Professor Kermode measures out his irony with ferro-concrete: "No one, I suppose,

will fail to be impressed by the moderation with which Erskine-Hill deploys an argument earlier used by, among others, Stalin against the kulaks." This, on behalf of a contrasted view of "the human world" and the occasional necessity to be indecorous in its defence. Is the Kermode quiver exhausted? By no means. Towards the end of his critique, he abandons euphemism and avers that "everything she says about my treatment of types and testimonies is either superfluous or false". In case that rebuke should be thought insufficiently exhaustive, he adds suggestively: "That the terms of such thinking is the Nazi Third Reich is another topic upon which ample instruction is available."

No letters, please, about "going out of context". One does not have to be a deconstructionist to know that quotation is out of context. Professor Kermode has a good beef against Dame Helen and scores well off her a number of points. He should have kept Stalin and Hitler out of it and his reply desecrated, as we have reviewed are fond of saying, a wider audience. Why confine himself to *Raritan*?

On this secrecy business, Sheila Bell has a lot to say. The American point is a kind of flux between confidentiality and candour. This guessing game, familiar to anyone who is experienced American warmth, is a puzzle. There is a real desire for openness and a real need for reserve. There is the gushing confession of Washington, and the grim secrecy of the South. There is the immediate but name, first time of New York and the constipated etiquette of the Mid West. Thus Bok's subtitle *On the Ethics of Concealment and Revelation* (Harvard University Press) embodies an aphoristic truth about the United States, if one could only decode it.

Raritan is available from Rutgers University, 165 College Avenue, New Brunswick, NJ 08903, USA, at \$12 a year, plus \$12 for air mail.

Among this week's contributors

Competition No 112

Readers are invited to identify the sources of the three quotations which follow and to send up the answers so that they reach this office not later than April 1. A prize of £10 is offered for the first correct set of answers opened on that date, or falling that the most nearly correct - in which case inspired guesswork will also be taken into consideration.

Entries, marked "Author, Author 112" on the envelope, should be addressed to the Editor, *The Times Literary Supplement*, Priory House, St John's Lane, London EC1M 4BX. The solution and results will appear on April 8.

I "All modern American literature comes from one book by Mark Twain called *Huckleberry Finn*. If you read it you must stop where the Nigger Jim is stolen from the boys. That is the real end. The rest is just cheating. But it's the finest book we've had. All American writing comes from that. There was nothing before. There has been nothing as good since."

2 I saw Gertrude Stein on the screen of a newsreel theatre one afternoon and I heard her read that famous passage of hers about pigeons on the grass, alas (the sorrow is, as you know, Miss Stein's). After reading about the pigeons on the grass alas, Miss Stein said: "This is a simple description of a landscape I have seen many times." I don't really believe that that is true. Pigeons on the grass alas may be a simple description of Miss Stein's own consciousness, but it is not a simple description of a plot of grass on which pigeons have alighted, are alighting, or are going to alight.

3 "The moment I started your book, I remember feeling - it was such a refreshing different feeling: why, this is the sort of book I used to read when I was a girl, a real old-fashioned novel. I felt as if I were just about to curl up in a window-seat with *Little Women*. And that's the sort of thing you can't fake. I'll bet you've often curled up in a window-seat with *Little Women*."

Competition No 108

Winner: Mrs June Benn
Answers:

1 Wine-drinking in England is, after all, only make-believe, a mere playing with an exotic inspiration. Tannyson had his part, whorero clings a good old tradition; sherris sack belongs to a nobler age; these drinks are not for us. Let him who will, toy with dubious Bordeaux or Burgundy; to get good of them, soul's good, you must be on the green side of thirty. Once or twice they have plucked me from despair; I would not speak unkindly of anything in cask or bottle which bears the great name of wine. But for me it is a thing of days gone by.

George Glasling, *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft*, "Autumn", XX.

2 I like Claret whenever I can have Claret I must drink it. . . For really it is so fine - it fills the mouth one's mouth with a gushing freshness - then goes down cool and feverless - then you do not feel it quavelling with your liver - no it is rather a Peace maker and lies as quiet as it did in the grape.

John Keats, letter to the George Keates, February 19, 1819.

3 Those were drinking days, and most men drank hard. So very great is the improvement Time has brought about in such habits, that a moderate statement of the quantity of wine and punch which one man would swallow in the course of a night, without any detriment to his reputation as a perfect gentleman, would seem, in these days, a ridiculous exaggeration.

Charles Dickens, *A Tale of Two Cities*, book 2, chapter 5.

GERALD ARBAHAM is the editor of *The Age of Beethoven*, Volume III of *The New Oxford History of Music*, 1982.

JULIAN BALOCK is a lecturer in the Study of Religion at King's College, London.

OSWYD BERT'S *War and Society in Revolutionary Europe, 1770-1870*, was published last year.

TERENCE CAVE is the author of *The Cornucopia Cave: Problems of Writing in the French Renaissance*, 1979.

R. L. CLUTTERBUCK teaches Politics at the University of Exeter.

CLAIRE CROSS's books include *Church and People 1450-1600*, 1976.

RUSSELL DAVIES is *The Sunday Times* television correspondent.

D. J. ENRIGHT is the editor of *The Oxford Book of Death*, which will be published in April.

WILLIAM J. FISHMAN is Barnett Shine Senior Research Fellow and Tutor in Labour Studies at Queen Mary College, London.

VICTORIA GLENONNING's biography of Edith Sitwell, *A Unicorn Among Lions*, was published in 1981.

RICHARD GRIFFITHS is Professor of French at University College, Cardiff. His most recent book, *Fellow Travellers of the Right*, was published in 1980.

K. H. D. HALEY's *The Dutch in the Seventeenth Century* was published in 1972.

MICHAEL HOFMANN's poems have appeared in *Poetry Introduction* 5.

PAMLA HOEN is the author of *A Georgian Porson and his Village*, 1981.

GRAHAM HUGHES's books include *An Essay on Criticism*, 1973, and *Selected Essays*, 1978.

JAMES JOLI's *Gravel* was published in 1977.

MAURICE LARKIN is Richard Pares Professor of History at the University of Edinburgh.

A. L. LE QUENNE's most recent book is *Carlyle*, 1982. His *The Bodyline Controversy* will be published shortly.

JACK LIVELY is the author of *Democracy*, 1975, and co-author of *Utilitarian Logic and Politics*, 1978.

OSWYN MURRAY is a Fellow of Balliol College, Oxford. His *Early Greece* was published in 1980.

MICHAEL NEVE is a lecturer in the History of Medicine at University College London.

IVAN ROOTS is Professor of History at the University of Exeter, and President of the Cornwell Association.

COLIN RUSS is a lecturer in German at the University of Kent.

GROFFRAY SAMPOSON's *Making Sense* was published in 1980.

DAVID SNOW's most recent book, *The Colours, Belbirds, Umbrellobirds and their Allies*, was published last year.

DENIS STEVENS is the editor of *The Renaissance Dialogues for Mixed Voices*, 1981.

JULIAN SYMONS's books include *Sat Adelaide*, 1980, and *Critical Observations*, 1981.

JEREMY WALORON is a lecturer in Political Theory at the University of Edinburgh.

J. F. WATKINS is Professor of Microbiology at the Welsh School of Medicine, Cardiff.

EUGEN WEBER's books include *Peasants into Frenchmen: The Socialization of Rural France, 1870-1914*, is Professor of History at the University of California, Los Angeles.

J. J. WHITE is a lecturer in Greek at University College London.

SARAH WINTLE is a lecturer in English at University College London.

LEWIS WOLFERT is Professor of Biology as applied to Medicine at Middlesex Hospital Medical School.

A computerized Location Register Twentieth Century English Language Manuscripts and Letters is now operation at the University of Reading Library. Whiteknights, Reading RG6 2AB, is a service for the university and the public. James Thompson, a Keeper of Archives and Manuscripts, is supported by a grant from the Standing Committee of the National and University Libraries (SCONUL). Stored in machine-readable form, using the British Library's BLAIS-LOCAS service, it is available for consultation by MSS in the British Isles and by those with access to the service.

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'Ulpian'

Sir, - Though Alan Watson does not mention it (February 18) my *Ulpian* tries to provide the essential data about a major legal writer whose work, via Justinian's *Digest*, has profoundly influenced the legal and institutional history of Europe. It deals with the genuineness of the works attributed to Ulpian, their dates, order and method of composition and sources. It fits his writing to the rest of his career and to the history of the Severan age, in which he was prominent enough to become praetorian prefect. A major theme of my work is that in 213-17 AD, in response to the enfranchisement of new citizens by the *constitutio Antoniniana*, Ulpian set out to restate Roman law in a systematic way and carried through his plan according to a precise schedule. Cosmopolitan and moderate, his synopsis prefigured Justinian's codification.

My results may be wrong. Watson simply ignores them. He treats the undertaking as trivial and settles for a catalogue of detailed complaints. Nearly all his points stem from misunderstandings of the sources or of passages in my book. They are specially careless in their neglect of the textual and historical background.

To give one example. He reproaches me with contradicting myself. I argue that, in general, only one person (the secretary or *libellis*) composed private receipts on the emperor's behalf. But, in the last years of Severus, I maintain that Ulpian left the office a *libellis* to go forward with Severus into Caesonia, while a new secretary remained behind with Oeta (perhaps in York). I also say that the imperial court, and Ulpian, sent on campaign (viz to Britain) with their law books and the documents needed to answer letters and petitions.

According to Watson, I am asserting that Ulpian took his books to Caesonia, and there composed receipts for Severus, so that there were two secretaries composing receipts at the same time! I nowhere say this. In fact the whole point of the arrangement was to leave Oeta to do the paper work.

Watson's review has the defects of which he accuses me. It is trivial and inaccurate. The new perspectives in Roman legal studies, whatever their ultimate value, deserve a more serious assessment than this.

TONY HONORÉ.

All Souls College, Oxford.

Sir, - The reviewer of Tony Honoré's *Ulpian* in your issue of February 18 was my predecessor in this Chair. I admire Alan Watson's work, cannot him among the half-dozen or so men from whom I have learnt most, find no difficulty in saying that he is a better scholar than I shall ever be. But something has gone badly and unjustly wrong.

No work of human hands is perfect. A reviewer in a hurry is tempted to look for the imperfections, leaving the merits to defend themselves. He risks giving wholly wrong impression. And here this risk has materialized. Worse still there is a serious danger that some readers will carry the incorrect impression back to *Tribonian* and *Emperors' and Lawyers'* earlier works. The reviewer says these works have become a cult with some, and he is not in the know. It is not to be surrendered to one's own judgment, as the Moomins are supposed to, that I affirm that these three books are the most important and brilliant contribution to Roman law since, say, 1927. That was the last edition of *Lex I Das Edictum Perpetuum* was published in Leipzig.

The primary materials of Roman law were accessible to anyone with Latin. After all Justinian preserved the law library in pocket form. That was ultimately accounts for the adoption and all the European legal systems followed: even an alien lawyer is better than none. But the "law" library means the law library, not the law library. The primary materials of Roman law were accessible to anyone with Latin. After all Justinian preserved the law library in pocket form. That was ultimately accounts for the adoption and all the European legal systems followed: even an alien lawyer is better than none. But the "law" library means the law library, not the law library.

It may be that mine is an isolated, unfortunate case. But if any other readers have had problems obtaining books from this source, I should be glad to hear from them.

L. MARS.
Department of Sociology and Anthropology, University College, Swansea.

mind alone gives meaning to his utterance. On top of that, interpolations were allowed. So the excerpts are doubly dangerous. This means, for the study of Roman law, that the giant contributions are made by those who reveal how the excerpting processes used by Justinian's commissioners actually bit into the original works, how the originals were themselves focused. Bluhme, Lenel and now Honoré. Those of us who write up the law of given topics or times are dispensable: the stuff is there in the *Digest* waiting to be anthologized again by quite ordinary brains. But what saves such anthologies from being as useless as a modern textbook built on *obiter dicta*, psalms on sand, is the information more obliquely and more laboriously gained about what the *Digest* is, how it was made, what went before. Successful work on that underlying rock is hard and rare, not easily repeated.

No scholar in the field can seriously doubt Honoré's immense achievement. To such an extent that he will be a fool who, explaining a text, takes no account of Honoré's results and methods. The reviewer suspects that Honoré has "no feel for language" and says outright that the scholarship is "sloppy", even that results are obtained by "sleight of hand". This is a sort of inverted puffery, the sort of nonsense estate agents talk. Nobody takes any notice of it. It is not true. It is the reverse of truth. And as for the speculative biographical detail which invites sarcasm, the reviewer misses the point. These books, *Ulpian* no less than *Tribonian*, are about the man's work, not his life. The life history is a form within which to conduct the more important study.

PETER BIRKS.
Department of Civil Law, University of Edinburgh, Old College, South Bridge, Edinburgh.

Mail-Order Books

Sir, - I write to inquire whether any of your readers has had difficulty in obtaining delivery of books from an American company called the Scholar's Bookshelf of 51 Everett Drive, Princeton, NJ, New Jersey, which has just circulated its sales catalogue to agents. Nobody in the company offers to deliver books within six weeks of receipt of the order, which has to be paid for in advance.

In March 1982, on receiving the sales brochure for Winter 1982, I dispatched an order to the company for \$92.70. I waited twelve weeks and when no books had arrived, I wrote to Scholar's Bookshelf. The company returned my letter with a handwritten note upon it which asked me to inquire if I had not yet received my books.

In June 1982, I received the company's brochure for the Spring/Summer sale of 1982 and wrote asking it to honour its earlier commitments before seeking further orders. In reply I received a standard letter urging patience.

I wrote again to the company in July 1982 and again my letter was returned, this time with a refund of \$15.45 in respect of two books I had ordered and which were no longer available. This was the first indication that my order was not to be honoured in full. Thereupon I complained about the handling of my order, but was again fobbed off with the same standard letter urging patience.

Finally, after I had written to the Managing Director without success, in October 1982 I informed Scholar's Bookshelf that unless I received my books within six weeks, I would publicize their handling of my case. I have had no reply to that letter and, needless to say, I am still waiting for the books I ordered some eleven months ago.

It may be that mine is an isolated, unfortunate case. But if any other readers have had problems obtaining books from this source, I should be glad to hear from them.

L. MARS.
Department of Sociology and Anthropology, University College, Swansea.

'Earth to Earth'

Sir, - John Cornwell's book *Earth to Earth*, published by Allen Lane, October 1982, and reviewed by William Trevor in your issue of November 5, 1982, claims to be "The true story of the lives and violent deaths" of a farming family called Luxton, who were found shot dead in November 1975. It has had wide publicity. Mr Cornwell's method of telling the story is by "allowing my informants to speak for themselves".

As some of his "informants" were strongly protest at certain of the statements made in the book. For example:

1. John Cornwell writes of the wretchedness of Frances Luxton's funeral. He must have attended the wrong one, as the funeral of all three Luxtons was held in Winkleigh Church, attended by, at our estimate, at least 120 people (many deeply distressed) and not eight bearers, and certainly not at Brushford Church with a congregation which "numbered no more than 20 souls" where "Nobody went".

2. John Cornwell gives four pages to a purported interview with Alex Borowez (wrongly spelt Borowicz), who had worked for the Luxtons, in which Borowez is alleged to have said that there was "funny business" between Robert Luxton and his sister, Frances. Also that Borowez gave "a big Russian laugh" when pointing out Alan Luxton's blood in the yard. Mr Borowez has no recollection of being interviewed by Mr Cornwell.

3. Mr Cornwell's general argument depends very much on his descriptions of the primitive nineteenth-century farming methods that the Luxtons are supposed to have used. Yet their tractors and modern machinery were sold at auction after their death. There was electricity, a telephone and mains water at West Chapple farm. Neighbours considered their good farmers.

4. The generally doom-laden atmosphere derives in part from his description of a number of suicides. But Mr Cornwell appears to have confused some of them. He transfers one suicide from a pub in Sampford, Devon, to the farmyard of Westcott, Honeychurch. He also attributes four suicides to the immediate family of John Gledhill (the present owner of West Chapple farm), which is nonsense.

These are typical of the sort of errors (we have counted around 240) which have caused great personal distress amongst local people mentioned in the book.

LOUISE HARLEY.
JOHN GLEDHILL.
SONIA BOROWEZ.
ALISTAIR SCALETTER.
ROSEMARY A. SHORT.
WILLIAM CLIFFORD SHORT.
IRIS P. DUNN.
DAVID SATOW.
CHRISTOPHER SATOW.
ALEX BOROWEZ.
EDITH BOROWEZ.
ELIZABETH ALLIES.
ALAN BARNES.

Brushford Barton, Wembworthy, Devon.

Nutrition and Health

Sir, - J. N. Morris thinks that I am creating my own mythology about the uses of nutrition education (Letters, February 11). Myth and evidence do not flourish together. Allow me to answer his request for supporting evidence by showing how difficult it is for him to support his own case on the value of nutrition education for the poor. In the Second World War nutrition education worked well but it was effectively backed by food rationing and food hand-outs of baby foods. Since 1950 the Report of the National Food Survey has shown a general decline in the proportion of energy taken from carbohydrates compared with fats - not necessarily a good trend. Now Professor Morris tells us that the overall picture for the intake of fats has been improved by reduced butter

consumption - but no wonder: just think of what was happening to the price of butter! As to the poor, in the first two decades after the war, the lowest income group lagged about nine years behind in adopting the top income group's food patterns. Why would this slow change be due to nutrition education rather than to a trickle-down effect from social emulation, advertising and a response to changing food technology and prices? The ambiguities here are just the stuff that myths are made from.

I can cite many nutritionists stating their conviction that food tastes are generally conservative, starting with Allen D. Ellston, *British Tastes* (1968).

MARY DOUGLAS.
College of Arts and Sciences, Northwestern University, Evanston, Illinois 60201.

Mourning in Papua

Sir, - Wordsworth once wrote of the selfish and foolish hope of *reasoning* his reader into an approbation of his poems, so I hope his shade will forgive me if I reply to Annette Weiner's letter (February 4) about my poem. The epigraph was not, as it happens, made up by me, but comes from the *Geography* of one E. Baron. I thought of saying so, but felt it would look like a claim to greater learning than I possess, since I haven't read Baron, but came across the sentence quoted in Roland Barthes's *Critique de la Vérité*.

So much for the record: what is more important is that the intention of my poem was precisely what Annette Weiner is pleading for. It was an attempt to suggest that an apparent impoverishing of language could be an enriching: not, I see, a very successful one, but I suppose it is some comfort for a poetic failure to see that I'm on the right side among ethnographers.

LAURENCE LERNER.

50 Compton Avenue, Brighton.

Translators and PLR

Sir, - Can anyone explain to me why a translator is not, for the purposes of Public Lending Right, treated as an author or co-author of a translated work?

I see the practical difficulties (but they have been overcome in favour of the translators, for example, where the translator is demonstrably the co-author of a book), but I thought this was supposed to be a Public Lending Right. Who is succeeding in particularising this injustice on translators, and why has there been no outcry? Is Arthur Waley not the author of his Chinese verse translations, Tony Harrison of his version of Aeschylus' *Oresteia*, Alistair Elliot of his renderings of Verlaine's erotic poems? When is a right not a right?

PETER JAY.
Anvil Press Poetry, 69 King George Street, London SE1 0LQ.

Military Punishment

Sir, - Valentine Cunningham's puzzlement (expressed in his review of Jocelyn Brooke's *The Image of a Drawn Sword*, February 4) about what Reynard is threatened with is soon dispelled. A triangle is a heavy metal frame used, as floggers will know from *The Charge of the Light Brigade*, in military floggings. The prisoner to be flogged with the cat was tied to it to receive the punishment.

T. J. DIPPEY.
9 Wilmington Close, South Bank, Hassocks, West Sussex.

The last sentence of Monty Hat-trecht's review of Sholem Aleichem's *Martian* (February 11) should have read: "The Nalevka in Warsaw was later to become an infamous ghetto; and this novel, for the modern reader, an extra resonance".

W. W. ROSSON.
University of Edinburgh.

'Jane Eyre'
Sir, - I should like to make a suggestion about the dating of Charlotte Brontë's novel *Jane Eyre* - i.e. not the date of first publication (1847), but the time when the events in the novel are supposed to have taken place.

The one certain pointer in the text seems to be the reference to Scott's *Marrion* (1808) as a new publication (Penguin edition, 1982, p. 396). But it has often been remarked that Blanche Ingram would be more likely to "doze on Corsica" (p. 398) after the publication of Byron's *Corsair* (1

The multiplication of the living

Lewis Wolpert

ERNST MAYR

The Growth of Biological Thought: Diversity, Evolution, and Inheritance. 974pp. Harvard University Press. £21. 06/4364457

Biology is now the most exciting of the sciences. It contains great problems still to be solved—how the brain works and how embryos develop. The internal workings of the cell are still mysterious. No longer could a physicist like Rutherford dismiss biology as "postage-stamp collecting". Much of the tremendous advances brought about by understanding at the molecular level. But it is not from this viewpoint that Ernst Mayr, the distinguished evolutionary biologist, has set out to write a history of biological ideas. His is much more a "whole animal" approach, informed by consideration of the diversity of nature and the evolutionary synthesis.

Physics and chemistry have dominated the history and philosophy of science, and Mayr has tried to redress what he sees as an intolerable imbalance. Biology is different from the physical sciences, with its own special characteristics and history. His claim for the autonomy of biology is based on the differences between living and inanimate objects, such as the possession of a genetic programme and uniqueness, and, in addition, the ethical implications of biology. Diversity, Mayr argues, makes biology quite different from physics. No two individuals in sexually reproducing populations are the same, and the number of species is enormous—even now, 10,000 new ones are described each year. While the purpose of mechanistic explanations was to further the unity of science, the almost unlimited diversity of animals and plants studied by biologists prompts a diametrically opposed procedure.

Mayr's approach to biological ideas reflects his distaste for reductionism—attempts to reduce biological phenomena to the laws of physical sciences: "attempts at a reduction of purely biological phenomena, or concepts, to the laws of physical sciences, have rarely, if ever, led to any advances in our understanding". He is not very fond of experiments either. "Observation in biology has probably produced more insights than all experiments combined." Such views must be totally unacceptable to many biologists. It is the aim and achievement of molecular biology and biophysics to understand biological processes, such as protein synthesis and the conduction of the nerve

impulse, in chemical and physical terms. Can Mayr really treat biology so as to exclude, for example, physiology and biochemistry, and animal behaviour? Apparently he can, for by biology he really means traditional evolutionary biology. His concern is with the diversity of the biological world. How is it to be understood? The answer, for Mayr, is through the evolution of species, and it is around this that the book is built. Molecular evolution, by contrast, is given only a sideways glance.

A special feature of biology that makes it different from all other sciences, is teleology. There is, in the biological world, the unmistakable sign of purpose. It was perfectly reasonable for Harvey to ask why there are valves in veins, or for Roux to puzzle over why nature had taken so much trouble to construct a complex apparatus to divide the nucleus of the cell at cell division, and so little trouble with the cytoplasm. These are questions about ultimate causes. One cannot ask such questions about glaciers, or the sunrise. What the non-biological sciences are concerned with are proximate causes—the causal mechanisms. Experimental biology, too, is devoted to just such causal analysis. It is the curious feature of biology that, though one can deal with proximate causes of processes of structures without the slightest reference to their function, it can be extremely helpful to make such reference. The two examples just quoted were, historically, helpful in determining, one the nature of the genetic material and the other the circulation of the blood.

The stated approach of Mayr's history is to follow Lord Acton's advice to "study problems, not periods"—to discover for each branch of biology its particular problems and how they were posed, opposed and often solved. The book thus starts with an attempt to place biology and its ideas in historical context. Then follow three main sections. The first of these deals with the diversity of life and its classification, particularly the species problem. The second section is about evolution and has Darwin at its core. (Since animal behaviour is excluded, sociobiology is only touched upon.) The third is about genetics, with Mendel at its core. In each section the history of the related ideas is treated in detail. Finally, there is a short epilogue called "Toward a science of science". The book contains an enormous amount of information and interesting, provocative comment. It presents, at times, a fascinating and lucid account of the growth of particular biological ideas, but at times also it is discursive

and technically difficult. An abridged version could be very widely read. A central theme is that Western thinking has been dominated by the essentialism of Plato and that it was not until the nineteenth century, when essentialism was replaced by population-type thinking, which stresses the uniqueness of everything in the organic world, that evolutionary biology could flower. So long as each species had an immutable essence, the idea of change was not possible. Essentialism typologized constancy, discontinuity, and typology. For the Christian, the marvels of nature were the living proof of the work of the Supreme Being. Natural theology revelled in the ways organisms were adapted to their mode of life. This view was also linked to a scale of perfection, which proceeded from the lowest organism, to man at the pinnacle. The scientific revolution in physics in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries surprisingly left natural history and systematics untouched, since essentialism persisted.

Mayr draws a distinction between classification and identification schemes. Identification is obviously of great practical value, but classification reflects one's view of nature, and particularly the relationship between organisms. Linnaeus, too, was dominated by essentialist thinking, and for him the genus was the corner-stone of classification. He saw his task as discovering the genera that had been created at the beginning of time.

Mayr is at his most compelling in his account of the development of evolutionary theory and his assessment of Darwin, for whom he has unrestrained admiration. Lamarck is positively reassessed, as Mayr considers that no one before him had appreciated as clearly the adaptive nature of animal structure. Lamarck introduced time into evolutionary processes, emphasizing the great age of the earth, and it is unfair that he should be thought of mainly in relation to the discredited theory of the inheritance of acquired characters. There is a detailed analysis of Lyell's uniformitarianism and Mayr suggests that, contrary to T.H. Huxley's view, this was more of a hindrance to the development of evolutionary theory than a help. Lyell played a key role, not only because of his work in geology but because he asked important questions about the extinction of species. He believed in a steady-state world in which lost species had to be replaced by the introduction of new ones.

The origins and development of Darwin's views are topics of almost inexhaustible fascination because there is so much information, such as

diaries and letters, which can be used to construct theories as to how his different ideas arose. How important, for example, was the influence of Malthus? When did Darwin read him? And so on. There is also the amazing story of Wallace arriving independently at the idea of natural selection. Why Darwin and Wallace? Mayr believes that it was because they were students of natural populations, and one cannot over-emphasize the impression made on Darwin by the extreme localization of every island species in the Galapagos. In Mayr's view, the "greatest unifying theory in biology, the theory of evolution, was largely a contribution made by systematics".

Mayr considers that a major obstacle to arriving at the theory of evolution was the fact that evolution cannot be observed directly, like the falling of a stone or the boiling of water. It can only be inferred, from, for example, the fossil evidence. Even more so—and Mayr fails to recognize it—evolution by natural selection is counter-intuitive. Thus he is puzzled by resistance to the theory of the evolution by natural selection. I do not believe that any biologist, no matter how convinced an evolutionist, really finds it easy to understand the actual processes by which animals, with their astonishing adaptiveness, have, in fact, evolved. There are just too many steps. Can one really envisage how the eye, with all its complex structures, arose by "chance" changes that were selected for? It must be a facile biologist who, in his heart of hearts, has no doubts. What persuades the biologist is the overwhelming evidence so clearly marshalled by Mayr, and the absence of an alternative. We may be convinced by the fossil evidence, by the genetics, and by the absence of the inheritance of acquired characteristics, by geographical isolation. We accept, but are we happy?

A reductionist approach is to see evolution in terms of change in gene frequency, whereas Mayr argues that the origin of diversity is now seen as equally important. But what is still not clear is how this diversity is generated. This is related to a central problem that is largely ignored in this book—namely, how is genetic information converted during embryonic development into animal form? It is generally accepted that the genes in the fertilized egg—the genotype—control development, but we still do not know how they do so. Development converts the genotype into the phenotype—that is animals and plants as we see them. Since selection in evolution acts almost exclusively on the phenotype, the process of development is clearly of central importance. To what extent

does development constrain the evolutionary process? This is really a question about what animals and plants are possible. It is usually a tacit assumption among evolutionary geneticists that any biological form is possible—just change the DNA in an appropriate manner. But there is no evidence that this is true, quite the contrary. It is very difficult to generate certain changes, such as doubling the number of bones in the forearm. And how could the appropriate DNA changes be brought about? One can illustrate the problem as follows: given as much time as required (millions of years) and as many mice as desired, could one design a selection programme so that feathered, winged mice would evolve? How could one select mice so that feathers evolved? It is a measure of our ignorance that we do not know the answer to this problem, which contradicts the impression given by Mayr that all the major problems of evolution are solved.

Particularly for biology, he argues, understanding is achieved more effectively by conceptual advances rather than the discovery of new facts. Biology proceeds by the gradual, but decisive development of new concepts and the abandonment of others. Biology is not sympathetic to Kuhn's idea of scientific revolution: the Darwinian revolution, for example, having been carried out over a large number of years. He claims that there is not a single case in biology where there was a drastic replacement of paradigm between two periods of normal science. This is hard to accept. The evolution that brought about molecular biology might be considered to involve just such a change in paradigm. It is not easy now to realize that as recently as 1947, the great geneticist Muller thought that the chemical role of DNA was to channel energy changes in the cell. Only when the genes and DNA were thought of in terms of information transfer did the revolution in molecular biology begin. Listing the main concepts of the gene, current in the first half of the century, Mayr says "Finally, the gene was viewed by some as a conveyor of highly specific information. In a very long time, it is such an obvious consensus about it; literary, military, and mind like about Johnson's heroes; poet, etc.; 'See also Anti-hero; Heroic; Heroines'. The term hero thus embraces a bewildering multitude of meanings, some of them contradictory, others strained or faddish, few of them devoted to a detailed history of evolutionary biology, this is a very disappointing dismissal of the history of the central concept in modern biology.

The excellent index to this collection of essays lists among the entries for *hero*, as builder, as colonizer or colonized; as father figure, or bemedaled child; Christian classical; comic hero; culture hero; domesticated; existential; Gothic hero-villain; Herculean hero; lack of consensus about; literary; military; mind like about Johnson's heroes; poet, etc.; "See also Anti-hero; Heroic; Heroines". The term hero thus embraces a bewildering multitude of meanings, some of them contradictory, others strained or faddish, few of them devoted to a detailed history of evolutionary biology, this is a very disappointing dismissal of the history of the central concept in modern biology.

Questions of origination

David Snow

BARRY G. GALE

Evolution Without Evidence: Charles Darwin and The Origin of Species. 238pp. Brighton: Harvester. £18.95 0 7108 0442 3

In 1838 Charles Darwin read Malthus's *Essay on the Principle of Population* and, in his own words, "being well prepared to appreciate the struggle for existence which everywhere goes on from long continued observations of the habits of animals and plants, it at once struck me that under these circumstances favourable variations would tend to be preserved, and unfavourable ones to be destroyed. . . . Here, then, I had at last got a theory by which to work." Recent historians have recognized the crucial importance of this event in the long and complex gestation of *The Origin of Species*, a process which lasted for a quarter of a century, from Darwin's visit to Patagonia and the Galapagos Islands to the publication of the *Origin* in 1859. Indeed it is one of the few really clear landmarks: the working out of most of the other essential elements of the synthesis of

1859 was altogether more hesitant and tentative. Historians have, it seems, tended in consequence to treat Darwin's reading of Malthus not as an early but important landmark passed in a long journey but as actually marking the end of the journey, the point at which Darwin had his theory of evolution substantially complete. This, at least, is Barry Gale's contention, and he aims to set the record straight.

He addresses how very incomplete Darwin's knowledge of biology still was in 1838, even by contemporary standards, and how long and arduous were his efforts to amass the necessary evidence for his theory. Gale documents, with a wealth of quotations from Darwin's correspondence, the uncertainties that had to be overcome before he felt able to present his theory to the public, and how through force of circumstances the book finally published was an abridged version, rather hastily prepared, of a longer and more thorough work which never appeared. But in his effort to make an original contribution to the thriving industry of "Darwin studies" Gale surely goes too far.

To call the book *Evolution without Evidence* is a considerable overstatement of what Gale considers the weakness of Darwin's work, and I suspect that he has been tempted by an

eye-catching title. Parts of his thesis are true enough, but others before Gale have made the same points. Darwin was at a very early stage in the development of his theory when he read Malthus, and twenty years later he was still left with many weak points and areas of ignorance, on which he was open to attack. Gale makes the point that Darwin "lacked", almost totally, any "direct" evidence, which seems to mean that he lacked evidence of evolutionary change being actually observed, or of fossil series showing unequivocal evidence of organisms changing gradually through geological time. But it is hard to know what direct evidence Darwin could have had. Even now there are not many cases of evolutionary changes being observed and measured, and most are very minor ones; and few series of fossils that show changes can be proved without any doubt to belong to a single evolving lineage. The apparent stability of most species in the fossil record is still a problem, and has given rise to the suggestion that most evolutionary change may take place relatively rapidly in small populations. Darwin's difficulties were ones that he could not possibly have over come. What he eventually produced was a theory so strongly supported by all the indirect evidence, and which made so much better sense of the facts of nature

than rival theories such as Creationism, that it has stood the test of time.

It is obviously of the greatest interest to investigate the development of Darwin's thought, since *The Origin of Species* revolutionized our view of the world and ourselves, but one cannot avoid the impression that the Darwin industry, as it may be called, is entering the period of diminishing returns. Gale refers to 130 books and papers dealing primarily with Darwin's work leading to the *Origin*, all but seventeen of them published since 1959, the centenary year, and he is much concerned not just with what Darwin thought and wrote but with what other Darwin scholars have written about it. "I think I probably agree with Greene's overall assessment of Ghiselin's book. . . . I would maintain that Ghiselin commits Himmelfarb's mistake, but in the opposite direction. . . . I have been impressed by Susan F. Cannon's rethinking of Darwin's period of long 'delay'. . . . Gruber's idea of Darwin's groping toward his theory is an intriguing one. . . . These are surely not points in which the general reader, even one with a strong interest in Darwin and evolution, is likely to be very interested; and the non-professional reader may be put off by the bulky apparatus of notes and other

end-matter, which makes up nearly a third of the book's total length." Much of *Evolution without Evidence* is a re-telling of Darwin's story, a career up to the year 1859, and it should be enjoyed by anyone with an interest in either Darwin the man or Darwin the scientist. But it rather falls between two stools, since it also attempts to be a scholarly contribution to the history of Darwinism, and its price suggests that it is aimed at libraries and a professional readership. Its test therefore be: does it really add significantly to what is already known? Does it, as the author hopes to demonstrate, lead "to new conclusions quite different from those now generally held regarding Darwin and his work"? The answer, I think, must be that it does not add very much, and does not lead to radically new conclusions.

Dolphins and Porpoises (270pp with black-and-white illustrations and pages in colour. Robert Hale. £14.95 0 7090 0737 X) by Richard Ellis was published recently as a companion volume to his *Book of Whales*. Ellis describes forty-three species of small cetaceans and his introduction includes a discussion of the problems of nomenclature and classification as the myths concerning dolphins

The turn of the native

Graham Hough

JOHN LUCAS

Romantic to Modern Literature: Essays and Ideas of Culture 1750-1900

231pp. Brighton: Harvester. £18.95. 0 7108 0405 9

The time may soon be coming when a book of literary essays will seem the appearance of a vanished cult, like values of Victorian sermons. Hence perhaps the slightly defiant air with which John Lucas introduces his collection. But discussion of literature falls naturally into the essay form; and for two hundred years or more, up to and including the present, most readable literary criticism has employed this vehicle rather than the treatise or the monograph—the essay, discrete, free-standing, suggestive rather than exhaustive, with a limited subject and designed to be consumed at a single sitting. These pieces range from Wordsworth to Forster, and they do not suffer from the essay's habitual defect—that of being a mere exhibition of opinion. They all have a ballast of history; and it is to history, character and society that Lucas's study of literature naturally leads. He has no particular axe to grind, but he has a point of view. We could call it roughly

the Orwellian point of view. He assumes, extravagant though it may seem, that novels and poems were written by human beings, and should be judged by their bearing on human affairs; and the nature of literary concerns him not at all.

He has an alert attention quickly arrested by oddities and anomalies. The radicalism of Dickens should have been gratified by the American social order; why in fact was it disgusted? And in what changed light did it make him see his own country? We think of Arnold and Dickens as irrevocably contained in separate compartments of Victorian culture. What happens if you put them in the same box? Which would seem most completely the victim of his society? Are the naturalist writers (Zola, Gissing and Moore) really the untendentious recorders they profess to be? Or are they not in fact hawking a doctrine so restrictive that it was bound to lead—even in lead the naturalists themselves—to the symbolism and mysticism of the end of the century? A careful essay on Wordsworth's earlier poetry sees it as a calculated rebuke to the sentiment of the picturesque, but also tacitly removes it from the Germanic *Naturphilosophie* which can be foisted on Wordsworth, and brings him back to his native roots.

This is close to Lucas's concerns. One of the best essays, "The Idea of

the Provincial", quotes Hardy: "Arnold is wrong about provincialism. . . . A certain provincialism of feeling is inevitable. It is the essence of individuality. . . ." In Lucas's view Arnold is wrong about Dickens too; and his flawed notion of centrality comes out badly against Dickens's frankly partial exposition of the values of his own class. The longest essay is on W. H. Mallock, author of *The New Republic*, whose satires on the intellectual world hit the headlines in their day but are neither witty enough nor deep enough to carry quite the weight that is put upon them here.

The general direction of Lucas's thinking is plain. Wordsworth is mainly the Wordsworth of "Salisbury Plain" and the story of Margaret, Arnold is respectfully but firmly dethroned; and you have to choose. If you choose Arnold, with his devotion to the pure idea and aversion from the sphere of practice, you not only have to reject Dickens, but Cobbett, Carlyle and Ruskin as well. Dickens himself is seen very much as a Radical with strong, buried Toryish roots. And that seems pretty well the position that these essays would endorse. Again one is reminded of Orwell, except that Lucas writes as a professional scholar of English literature, which Orwell never did. The tutelary presence invoked in

the introduction is the late D. J. Gorton—very much the scholarly historical critic. Lucas pays a generous tribute to him as a brilliant teacher, who assumed in his pupils, and therefore often managed to create, an interest in the life of the mind equal to his own. Learning, a sense of history, and the belief that everyone could profit from the study of literature—these are the qualities that Lucas admires in Gorton; and he would build them up against the know-nothing latitudes of the 1960s and the anti-culture spray-gunning of 1970-day. If it is the radical who comes to the top in Lucas's social outlook, it is the Tory in his idea of the proper programme for the academy.

I meant to leave the crisis in English studies to rest in peace; but since Lucas raises it, explicitly in his introduction and implicitly throughout, we had better have a go at it. Lucas is willing to admit that there probably is a crisis; and puts it down to causes no more complex than the swelling tide of ignorance, and the canonization of ignorance in the name of elitism, personal response or whatever. These attitudes are purely explained, he finds, by justified irritation with the genteel tradition. Maybe so; but Lucas seems to have got into a different time-warp from mine: "If you were a student at university during the 1950s the chances were that you would be taught by old-

style scholars who typically thought of themselves as wine-tasters of literature, and for whom the question of taste could be resolved by the litmus test of whether or not one was a gentleman." I cannot think in what sequestered nook these heirs of Q and Sir Henry Newbolt were still to be found in the 1950s. I was a university student thirty years before that, and even in that legendary period the breathless hush in the close had already been considerably disturbed. And the New Criticism, which appears here as a newly-forged weapon of the 1950s, surely had its heyday fifteen or twenty years earlier, and has been succeeded by three or four subsequent revolutions.

Nothing that happens in English departments of universities merits the name of crisis; but the present unease is real, and has unavoidable causes. It is one of Lucas's strengths that he writes as an Englishman about the culture of his own country, bound to the topics of his discourse by innumerable ties of familiarity and association. So, until well on in this century did most people who wrote about English literature. Now they are in a minority. The vast mass of academic publication in English studies comes from America, from people in whom England was never a physical presence, who have no relation to English culture and no particular need or wish to form one. An English literary education as Lucas instinctively sees it is the history of a continuity, linking the experienced present with the not-quite-vanished past, and making the present more comprehensible in so doing. But over most of the huge English-speaking world it is just a "subject" like any other. Having no roots it is in need of constant theoretical elaboration, and having no boundaries it is constantly expanding to include alien elements that devalue the central core. A much healthier state of affairs, you might say, since it corresponds to the actual state of the world. But something quite different from traditional English studies. And greatly in need of some principle of order and some criterion of value, if it is not to slip out into a debilitating mish-mash. These reflections are not explicit in Professor Lucas's book, but they authentically arise from it.

Standing centre-stage

Robert Halsband

ROBERT FOLKENFLIK (Editor)

The English Hero, 1660-1800. 200pp. University of Delaware Press. (Associated University Presses). £14.50. 0 87413 174 X.

The excellent index to this collection of essays lists among the entries for *hero*, as builder, as colonizer or colonized; as father figure, or bemedaled child; Christian classical; comic hero; culture hero; domesticated; existential; Gothic hero-villain; Herculean hero; lack of consensus about; literary; military; mind like about Johnson's heroes; poet, etc.; "See also Anti-hero; Heroic; Heroines". The term hero thus embraces a bewildering multitude of meanings, some of them contradictory, others strained or faddish, few of them devoted to a detailed history of evolutionary biology, this is a very disappointing dismissal of the history of the central concept in modern biology.

If, as he writes in his acknowledgements, "All of the essays were commissioned especially for this volume", a more coherent synthesis should have resulted. Yet the first note in C. J. Rawson's contribution states: "This essay is part of a larger study of Swift now in preparation." His essay, by far the longest in the collection, is entirely about the mock-heroic style of Swift's verse, with an extended analysis of that intractable and over-explicated poem *Verses on the Death of Doctor Swift*. The essay by Peter Hughes is reprinted from *English Studies* of 1979, and Robert Folkenflik has extracted a section from his own 1978 book on Johnson as biographer. But at least these two, if not especially commissioned, bear directly on the subject promised by the title of the volume.

Underlining this lack of coherence is the puzzling absence anywhere of mention of an outstanding collection of papers about heroes and heroisms in the periods before 1660. *Enlightenment and the Hero in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance* edited by Norman T. Burns and Christopher J. Reagan (1975), these earlier studies display many of the basic ideas found between 1660 and 1800. The heroes of the ancient world and middle ages, who were predominantly warlike or humorous or religious, were retooled (so to speak) to conform to the humanistic spirit of Erasmus and his followers, thus becoming anti-heroic or (a possibility too little explored) simply unheroic. Such "concepts", articulated in that book with exemplary clarity, are a legacy to the

eighteenth century, and should not be overlooked.

If Folkenflik's collection suffers, then, from being unfocused and short-sighted, it contains several notably good essays. That by Hughes, wittily entitled "Wars within Doors: Heroic Heroism in Eighteenth-Century Literature", develops the thesis that the military heroisms of the epic were transformed, during that period, into the heroism arising from erotic conflict. Honour, the standard aristocratic principle, gave way to the "republican principle of virtue", while (in parallel movement) tragedy, epic and heroic epistle, which were based on honour, were replaced by satire, history and the novel, which were based on virtue. The "conquests of the sword and siege train" turned inward to those of the phallus and erotic intrigue. This plangent exposition, if not entirely persuasive, is presented with a dazzling display of examples from both French and English literature.

A contrast, and excellent in its own way, Robert Hume's brief essay "Concepts of the Hero in Comedy Drama, 1660-1710" disentangles the unheroic protagonists of Restoration comedy, which he characterizes as being far from monolithic. (This principle of discrimination underlies Hume's 1976 book on late seventeenth-century drama.) A plain, blunt style lends force to his commonsensical divisions of the four general types of comic heroes, from the savagely satirized ones to the exemplary ones, in the movement that led to sentimental comedy.

The same kind of bracing scepticism and analytic scalpel is used by W. B. Carnochan to strip away the verbal layers of Dryden's *Alexander's Feast*; or, *The Power of Music*. Not surprisingly, the hero of that ode to St Cecilia, patroness of music, is not the military conqueror but Timotheus the musician, whose weapon is the lyre. With that he subdued his master to become the poet-hero.

The opening essay, John William Johnson's "England, 1660-1800: An Age without a Hero?", is a free-wheeling survey that leaves its title-question with a bewildering number of answers. Occasionally he is short on precision, as when he asserts that William III was the last English monarch to be painted wearing armour (an assertion echoed by the editor); he overlooks the ornate portraits of

George I and George II most recently reproduced in Ragnhild Hatton's authoritative biography (1978) of George I. He also, given his recklessly allusive style, might have mentioned Boswell's armour as a significant transformation in protective covering. (This would have suited Hughes's essay very nicely as well.) Perhaps he is too ready to accept satiric quips for historical facts, as when he writes that the "only arms that the German mistresses, as Pope archly implied in his *Epistle to Augustus*", in fact, George II was excessively martial, the last English monarch to lead his troops in battle (at Dettingen in 1743). And how many German mistresses did he have besides Mme Walmoden, whom he brought over after his wife's death?

An essay on *Abraham and Achilleus* by Larry Carver, on Fielding's heroes by J. Paul Hunter, on Richardson's Lovelace and Restoration heroes by Arthur Lindley, on the heroes of Gothic fiction by Howard Anderson and on "Johnson's Heroes" by Folkenflik round out the collection. Unmentioned in the last is Johnson's remark that "he who aspires to be a hero must drink brandy", but then Johnson smiled as he uttered that prescription. No such humour lightens the serious freight of this essay.

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BARBARA GOODWIN and
KEITH TAYLOR
The Politics of Utopia: A study in
theory and practice
292pp. Hutchinson. £12 (paperback,
£5.95).
0 09 149000 6

Barbara Goodwin and Keith Taylor stress the centrality of the value of co-operation in most utopian visions. It is sad to report, then, that their own co-operation in this book, which is openly and avowedly a defence of utopianism, is not wholly successful. They do not attempt in more than summary fashion what has been done recently and exhaustively by Frank and Fritzie Manuel, to give a historical account of utopianism. The book opens with a double project: to examine and defend utopianism as a particular and valuable form of political theorizing, and to explain utopian ideas in terms of the socio-economic background of those who put them forward or those attracted by them, the first task being tackled by Goodwin and the second by Taylor. One of the major doubts their book raises is whether these two complementary or conflicting projects.

The least important reason for the uneasy fit between the two parts of the book is a degree of repetition, particularly in their accounts of traditional utopian ideas. More important are divergences in conceptual perspectives, firstly and centrally in what is to count as utopianism. The book opens with a fashionable bow towards the notion of essentially contested concepts, which is increasingly apparently an invitation to either ambiguity or dogmatism. Nevertheless, the two authors do reach clear, although dissimilar, definitions of utopianism. For Goodwin, it is a detailed and integrated depiction of an

ideal society based on some critique of existing institutions. For Taylor, following Karl Mannheim, it is a total transcendence of the prevailing order which by definition must emanate from an excluded class or group. This difference in definitions leads to differences on who are to count as utopians. Goodwin cites Robert Nozick and Hayek as well as Marcus Aurelius as contemporary bearers of the utopian tradition, whilst Taylor dismisses any present possibility of liberal utopianism and sees the New Left as the only sure bearer of the tradition (with the feminist and ecological movements as possibilities). It leads also to methodological differences on how utopian ideas, particularly those historically distant, can best be treated. Goodwin holds that at there is at least one problem; that of order, which has constantly confronted the political theorist and that, at least to this degree, utopian ideas from Plato to the present can be viewed *sub specie aeternitatis*. Taylor, insisting that utopias are created by particular groups facing particular problems in specific and - if not unique - historically circumscribed conditions, moves very close to the relativist approach explicitly rejected by Goodwin.

If the co-operation is uneasy thus far, the two authors do seem to share a common beleaguered and evangelical stance. They present themselves as battling against what they see as, at least in this country, the prevailing intellectual orthodoxy and as offering novel alternatives to "normal" or "traditional" political theory, whose acceptance would be academically and politically rejuvenating. This proselytizing ambition produces much the most spirited and interesting arguments in the book, but, as in many intellectual rebellions, the confrontation is sustained at the cost of exaggerating the divisions and caricaturing the enemies of utopia. Taylor claims to be blazing new trails in

the study of political theory by tracing the socio-economic affiliations of a doctrine's adherents and its historical influences; but in fact this has been a commonplace concern of the history of political thought, and the placing of ideas in their context - ideological, linguistic or socio-economic - has good claims to be at least one of the prevailing orthodoxies.

Goodwin faces rather different foes. She sees herself as fighting against a predominantly empiricist mode of thought that, on her argument, demands tests of feasibility which cannot possibly be met by utopian visions. The tyranny of facts leads to the tyranny of the present, and this excludes from serious consideration pictures of ideal societies predicated on radically novel individual motives and social behaviour. This mode of thought concentrates on the probable and ignores the merely possible. Yet, Goodwin acknowledges, even the possible is subject to tests of feasibility. Pigs might fly and humans might be

immortal, but the acceptance of such possibilities would be a frail foundation for social speculation. Goodwin of course does not disagree and rejects some utopian visions as bizarre (even - more severely - as pornographic) since they depart so far from experience. But, once this mild tyranny of facts is admitted, then it is difficult to see why the most persistent grounds for rejecting utopian schemes - the alleged acquisitive, competitive, self-interested character of humans - should be ruled out of court as empiricist aberrations. Whether these assumptions are right or wrong can be judged, like pigs and mortality, only of the bar of experience.

To present the empiricist/utopian antithesis as fundamental is, however, to caricature the situation. What needs to be shown is that utopian theorizing has decided advantages over other, perhaps more established, forms of normative political theory. One common alternative has been to test existing institutions and practices

against general political principles, and to devise ways of moving closer to conformity with those principles, taking into account whatever empirical knowledge might be relevant and available. Such a procedure does not require the complete detailing of entirely novel and ideal societies in a utopian fashion. It is the weakness of Goodwin's argument that she does not squarely face this alternative. It is its strength, however, that she does nevertheless suggest powerful reasons for preferring the more dramatic, fictional, fantastic approach to our future. Her definition of utopianism in terms of its presentation of alternative possible, "counterfactual" worlds is a reasoned plea for greater play to be given to the political imagination. In this, surely, she is right. For, whatever the very real constraints on social change - and it is one central responsibility of political analysis to detail these - and of politicians to heed them - the one constraint we should not accept is our own failure to imagine alternatives to what is.

Doing without the State

Jeremy Waldron

MICHAEL TAYLOR
Community, Anarchy and Liberty
184pp. Cambridge University Press.
£14 (paperback, £4.95).
0 521 24621 0

For almost all of the 50,000 years since *Homo sapiens* emerged, he has lived in "primitive" stateless communities; today everywhere he is corralled into states. How or why did this change come about? And - a more mystifying question from our present position - how was peace and social order

possible for so long without the constraints of government, politics and law? If peace without government was possible then, why isn't it possible now?

These are the questions Michael Taylor sets out to answer in his new book on anarchy. An earlier work, *Anarchy and Cooperation* (1976), used techniques of game-theoretic analysis to establish the abstract possibility of order and cooperation among beings who were less than perfectly altruistic. But *Community, Anarchy and Liberty* addresses the fact that anarchic cooperation is not just an abstract possibility: it was the main feature of social life for a very long time, and still is in isolated pockets of communal resistance to the unctuous tentacles of state domination. In the new book Taylor sets out what we know about anarchies - how they work, when they prosper, why they perish - and locates it helpfully in relation to the theory and philosophy of the state. The result is a clear, level-headed and informative account of the reality and prospects of anarchy.

To write about anarchy, one needs a definition of *state*. Like Max Weber, Taylor focuses mainly on the extent to which the use of power and physical force is concentrated in a society. A state exists if the means of force are so unequally distributed that their deployment can effectively be controlled or directed by a central organization or the collective will of the community. An anarchy exists when the means of force are widely dispersed in a society (if, for example, any adult male is expected to be able to use it) so that the deployment of force is not subject to central control. Even if there are respected mediators in a community (ie, if there is some specialization in regard to dispute-settlement, etc), still it is an anarchy if they do not have, as a matter of course, effective power to enforce their determinations. No doubt these criteria are vague and their satisfaction a matter of degree. But this is an impression which is clearly demanded by the nature of the subject-matter.

It is important that anarchy is not defined by the absence of power or force. Taylor's anarchies are not romantic idylls. The viability of an anarchic society is a matter of whether power can be used in a diffuse and non-centralized way to maintain social order. (In his discussion of power, Taylor steers an expert course through the various difficulties surrounding that concept.) Nor does Taylor rely on any presupposition of natural sociability. Of course humans are disposed to live in peace in community, but they have other dispositions as well. What Taylor does is to identify the structures and mechanisms whereby the sociable dispositions are reinforced and the disruptive tendencies contained and disrupted.

The material he uses is not new. This is a mass of anthropological evidence relating to "primitive" tribal anarchies and also a number of

historical and sociological studies of the more or less self-contained pockets of anarchy that have existed in modern times - closed peasant communities and various utopian experiments in the West. Everywhere the role of reciprocity - for example, food-sharing and the exchange of gifts - is crucial in sustaining friendly intercourse. If reciprocity is the basis of economic life, then familiar sanctions such as exclusion, shaming and ostracism have naturally a greater force. In "primitive" societies, the threat of direct retaliation (and its escalation into blood-feud through kinship and village structures) becomes a more powerful sanction too against a background of normal reciprocity because it is more disruptive. What matters is not so much the avoidance of direct conflict but the incentives among contestants and bystanders to end it.

If reciprocity is the structural backbone of anarchic community, rough equality of material resources is its necessary prerequisite. It is not just conflict that must be checked, but also whatever tendencies there are in the direction of over-production and accumulation. But Taylor rejects the Marxist theory which locates the origins of the state in the emergence of surplus which can be socially appropriated. All the evidence, he argues, indicates that intensification of production to generate a surplus is almost always a consequence of concomitant, rather than a cause, of state formation. Instead he offers what might be described as a "pre-Trotskyist" explanation of the setting up of state: the permanent centralization of power in a community is a response to the presence and activities of neighbouring states. "The egalitarian anarchic community, though it can last for millennia if left alone, is terribly vulnerable to other states."

But the process must have started somewhere. Taylor suggests that the explanation lies in the inhibition of social fissioning. Persistent conflict in a community may be avoidable only by the secession of a subgroup, moving away to found a new community of its own. But if the new community is too small, it becomes too costly (for economic, demographic, or geographical reasons) to be more powerful, and maybe even more centralized - ways of containing conflict must be established. Taylor does not attempt to avoid this conclusion which follows from the accounts of state formation: anarchy now not really an option for us in an overcrowded and state-ridden world.

Community, Anarchy and Liberty is a fine book. I can't think of a better more stimulating introduction to a serious and critical thought about the state. Anyone who reads it (and the audience will come away with a well enough written and useful impression that there is much more to anarchism than what appears in the market-place, in Lebanon, or in the market-place of France then learning to read and write.

LOUIS-HENRI PARIAS (Editor)

Histoire générale de l'enseignement et de l'éducation en France
Tome 1. Michel Rouché: *Des Origines à la Renaissance*. 677pp.

Tome 2. François Lebrun, Marc Venard, and Jean Quéniart: *De Guibert aux Lumières*. 669pp.

Tome 3. François Mayeur: *De la Révolution à l'Ecole républicaine*. 683pp.

Tome 4. Antoine Prost: *L'Ecole et la Famille dans une société en mutation*. 129pp.

Paris: Nouvelle Librairie de France.

La Vie quotidienne des professeurs de 1870 à 1940

318pp. Paris: Hachette. 72 fr.

Many books about the Ed Biz are as dull as the schools that teach its mysteries. This is not true of the treatises reviewed here, whether the four volumes beautifully produced, illustrated and documented under the direction of L.-H. Parias, or the altogether lighter and more discursive contribution of Pierre Guiral and Guy Thullier. All are good reads, all provide excellent value in form and substance, all can be warmly recommended.

The four massive tomes of the *Histoire générale de l'enseignement et de l'éducation en France* are a delight to read because the history of education they provide is, also, a history of everything that went on around it. It speaks of the family that provides the students, of youth from nurseries to adolescents, of the society for life in which the education - sometimes - prepares, of social attitudes that regulate and colour the schools' activities, of labour and the professions, trades and institutions which education serves or fashions, the administrations that help to staff the bureaucracies that run it, of the technologies of the ideas, mores and politics that determine its aims and rules and budgets, of the *intellectuals* that mark it and which, in turn, it moulds: a history of society, in sum, in its changes, of course, but also in continuities that sometimes make one wonder whether the old talk about national character is quite as out of date as we have learnt to think.

Michel Rouché, for example, stresses the high regard in which the Gauls held speech and its symbol, the tongue: locus of primordial virtues, like spirit, political eloquence, prophecies and public persuasion. He also discusses the widespread practice among free Gauls, but especially among polygamous nobles, of placing their children out to nurse and then leaving them to be brought up by others. Among the Gauls, this created bonds of alternative brotherhood and fatherhood. (The perennially striking of out-nursing practices which marked most levels of French society until quite recently, and whose imprint on French character can still be glimpsed today.) Finally, Rouché shows how the Roman conquest introduced another long-lasting practice: illiterate bilingualism. Like their Roman counterparts, Gaulish youths who learnt to read and write began not with Latin but with Greek, their offspring (or successors) continued to approach literacy through a foreign language: Greek or Latin until the seventeenth century; French, foreign to many until the nineteenth century (in 1832, only three non-Francoisus Saragay's nine students in the Collège de Lésèven knew how to handle French). Rouché quotes the grandson of Ausonius, Paulinus of Pella, on the trouble he had at school to understand books in a language he hardly knew. Many generations would share his pains. Since few wives and mothers in the non-Francoisus areas of France had access - even to the primitive bilingualism of their menfolk; learning to read and write in one's mother tongue is even more of an innovation in France than learning to read and write.

Everything, really, begins with the Romans, in philology as in fact. In Latin, *in-fans*, from which *enfant* derives, means one who does not speak, a brutish creature that can't communicate. Culture, whether of land or mind, is a conquest of nature through labour, the extraction (*le-ducere*) of the best possibilities of man out of his savage nature, the refinement (*le-rudire*) of the brute (*rudis*) into a being sufficiently polished (of Greek *Polis*) to live in (urban) society. The number of such "rudites" varied, but literacy was always recognized as crucial to the recruitment of public servants and senior officers, whether in the declining Empire - which paid teachers poorly, as they have been paid ever since, but exempted them from taxes - or in later centuries.

By the fourth century they also had "books", much easier to handle and less cumbersome than scrolls. The new pages could be turned with one hand, while the other hand copied, took notes or simply scratched. And the parchment of which they were made was cheaper than Egyptian papyrus, lasted longer, and could be marked by that ingenious fifth-century innovation, the quill or pen. Its cheapness, however, was relative. Parchment was made - mostly - of sheepskin (one skin folded in two gave a large in-folio, folded in four or eight the everyday books we describe as quartos or octavos), and a large volume could easily take a hundred sheep, not counting the goat for the binding. A gourmandizing bear like the one who, early in the twelfth century, chomped away a volume of the correspondence between St Augustine and St Jerome, could ruin a small monastery. The dearth and the dearth of parchment, bottleneck of book production, were only overcome by the appearance of paper, whose secrets were introduced from Spain in the thirteenth century and from Italy in the fourteenth. By the fourteenth century, the sheet of paper made from rags cost ten times less than its sheepskin equivalent.

It is interesting to note that universities, born in the twelfth century, quickly acquired familiar lineaments. A Chancellor of the University of Paris, Philippe de Grève, who died in 1236, complained that "in days of yore lectures and debates were frequent, and all were keen on study. Now... there is little teaching, time is spent on meetings and discussions, and, while the old davsse regulations, the young think only of abominable plots..."

With books few and scarce, teaching was just what it was called: a *lectio* (reading, lecture). Reading a book usually meant reading it aloud; as far as students were concerned, hear it read and commented on by the master. This rarity, from which Oargantua suffered at school and which Pantagruel could afford to ignore, only ebbed with paper and print. Though the *cours magistral* has proved long-lived, and with it the prestige of the *parole verbale*, by the sixteenth century the book was no longer an exceptional object in urban life. Even journeymen could, if they wished, afford the penny or two, equivalent of an hour's wages, that went to buy a chapbook, prayerbook or some other cheap brochure. But, printed matter remained scarce in the largely illiterate countryside, where magic powers were attributed to illegible fomes, and their very possession afforded a sorcerer's well into the nineteenth century.

In towns as in the country skills like reading and writing even more, continued rare (though a book could be deciphered even by those who did not know how to read) and learning for most, as Volumes II and III of the *Histoire générale* make clear, meant a learning from their own experience and the experience of others, initiation into, and imitation of, routines, gestures, skills, attitudes, feelings and beliefs, with little relation to formal schooling. Still, by the sixteenth century, at the urban level, significant minorities - though probably no more numerous than in the thirteenth century - had received some basic instruction, often not in Latin but in the more useful, current speech. The government, trying to cope with

Eugen Weber

ambient disorders, looked for competent administrators. You cannot govern without records and archives, or trade without business correspondence and accounts, or tax without clerks and lawmen, or preach without a modicum of instruction. Besides, though suspect in one sense because related to heresy, reading and writing were also regarded as major means for restraining unruly passions.

Not to mention inculcating the correct religious doctrine. By the end of the seventeenth century, most French dioceses had a seminary where French priests were trained. Few country priests, until that time, had been capable of catechizing the young or delivering a sermon. Henceforth their homilies would provide the essence of adult education. Delivered in the local speech - Breton, Flemish, or some idiom of Oc - they confirmed local particularities and sheered away from the sort of cultural integration eased by regular exposure to the language of, say, the English liturgy. At the same time, a better trained, better educated clergy started to grow away from the common people whom it was supposed to lead and, especially, from those city folk who were becoming literate in French, not Latin; a process that would show its fruits in the Christian antiquarianism of the eighteenth century and in the more straightforward detachment of the nineteenth.

The map of French literacy that took shape during those times underwent little change until the present century: it contrasted North and East with South and West, towns with country, rich with poor, men with women (the separation of sexes in the schools was one legacy of the Counter-Reformation). One can also compare Protestants with Catholics, even though, by the late seventeenth century, Jean Quéniart finds that *scolarisation* depends less on Protestantism as such than on competition between Protestants and Catholics in areas where a serious Huguenot challenge leads to exceptional efforts on the Catholic side. And then, of course, in every realm, there is the great divide between Paris and the provinces. In the mid-seventeenth century, four out of five parishes in the Ile de France have a school, two out of three parishes in Dauphiné have none; almost all these schools are in towns, and all the children who attend them have some means. Less expectably, by that time, some 60,000 little Frenchmen were following Latin studies in a college, a number that compares favourably with the 187,000 in the secondary establishments towards the end of the nineteenth century, by which time the country's population had doubled.

In the mid-1600s as a century later, the costs of schooling, even of an elementary one, remained too high for the lower orders. Which was just as well, since most "enlightened" thinkers and administrators (with Diderot an outstanding exception) agreed with the progressive *intendant* of Bligny that "peasants need nothing less than to know how to read", and with Voltaire that it was essential to keep "the poor ignorant as possible, even when, as Diderot explained, "a peasant who knows how to read and write is harder to oppress than one who does not". Quéniart concludes, fairly that in the eighteenth century, the illiterate countryside, where magic powers were attributed to illegible fomes, and their very possession afforded a sorcerer's well into the nineteenth century.

Allyzants thou shalt pursue
As far as they can run and rue
The income of an émigré
To poor sans-culottes thou shalt pay
No faith thou place in the saint's prayers
Of coldies who pretend conversions
Your action meetings you'll attend
Every five days to the year's end
Otherwise, despite much rhetoric and many good intentions, nothing much changed at the popular level for some time. Both Revolution and Empire heeded Voltaire's advice: that the people to teach were not labourers and the poorer sort, but good bourgeois, and the innovations of those busy years were directed towards opening more

careers to talent, witness the foundation of the Muséum, Ecole Polytechnique, Ecole Normale, Arts et Métiers, and those Ecoles Centrales that soon became lycées.

The budget of elementary education continued minuscule (100,000fr. in 1829), grew perceptibly after Guizot's intervention in 1833 (1,500,000 fr), but stood at only 7 million in 1866, out of a national budget of two billion francs. Material conditions remained miserable, with many schools sited in barns, stables, cellars, woodsheds or other hovels, frequently part of domestic quarters where bed, stove, chickens, babies and family pig might struggle for space with the dominant, reluctant charges. As late as the 1880s, many teachers picked up additional income as beadles, bell-ringers, ehoif-masters, grave-diggers, poachers, sellers of liquor, tobacconists or secretaries of an illiterate mayor and council. Women teachers, where they existed, earned less than domestics (a mole teacher's wages in the 1860s compared badly with those of a good cook), and nuns earned even less - one good reason for preferring to employ them.

Public instruction hastened slowly. Novelties like the English-inspired mutual schools, which liberals supported and conservatives denounced for their lack of moral and religious principles as for the ragged, filthy children of the lowest classes that they gathered, proved most effective, as Huguenots had done when they inspired active Catholic responses like the schools of the *frères de la Doctrine chrétienne*. They seem to have pioneered the use of economical slates, and also of rote learning by means of psalmody - hence the little boy responding to a request to recite part of the multiplication table by humming a tune: "M'sieu, j'sais l'oir, je ne me rappelle plus les paroles..."

Henceforth, schooling of all sorts would be less and less the Church's business, more and more that of the State. The school question, as François Mayeur points out, became less a pedagogical than a political one, the teacher's competence counting less than his ideological qualifications; testimony, if any were needed, that no one now could afford to ignore schooling for the masses as for the classes. All agreed that the two should proceed on quite different lines: the one, truly primary, as a republican mandarin insisted, the other imparting true culture by way of the humanities. But even the popular, primary education that the Republicans sought, and that they succeeded in introducing in the 1880s, was revolutionary.

In the mid-nineteenth century, when Jules Renard's Ragotte attended school (for eight months) there were two groups in it: *les écrivains*, and those who only learnt to read. Ragotte's children, whose lives she marked with the little letters that she knew - P, L, and that she knew because she'd had to mark their lines, learnt to read, write and count in free, compulsory schools without which they could scarcely have hoped for even a humble job. Before literacy spread it had to pay, and to be seen to pay; and that did not occur until the last part of the nineteenth century, the same time as French shouldered aside the vestiges of local speech, civic catechisms took over from Christian ones, and French history from *histoire sainte*. An army of *instituteurs*, 120,000 strong by 1914, was rising to face the long-challenged dominance of the clergy; and the Church, conscious of the stakes, struggled to retain or reconquer the young, not least by taking up sports and games and more effectively than state schools did. Many an *abbé*, suggests François Mayeur, learnt to kick a football for the greater glory of God; and God, it seems, responded. By 1914, the Gymnastic and Sporting Federation of Catholic paragonages - from which the French Football Federation was to grow - had become the largest athletic movement in France.

This success of the Church in a domain that long remained a kind of luxury, reflected an overall success in maintaining the upper-class appeal. For Thullier and Guiral, and the two Frances dear to François Mauriac are a massive

statistical fact, because nobles, people of means, officers and those good Catholics who could afford it, sent their children to "free" schools. In 1893, ecclesiastical colleges taught 51 per cent of the 175,000 inmates of the secondary system. And if their share of places in the *grandes Ecoles* was a good deal less than we have been led to believe (Ecole Navale 26 per cent, St Cyr 24 per cent, Centrale 21 per cent, Polytechnique 14 per cent), Thullier and Guiral confirm that the great majority of upper-class girls continued to attend convents and religious boarding-schools until 1940. Not in overwhelming numbers, though; since both in 1914 and in 1930 one finds only one girl for every two boys in secondary school. Access to higher education, very difficult in the late nineteenth century, continued rare for girls even in the twentieth; and women teachers, of course, had a particularly hard row to hoe, witness the school inspector's note of 1907, about a Mlle B who, "having spent a long time in England, has adopted the free manners of English *mères*. She dares to walk alone on the ramparts. At Langres is scandalous, and her Principal is terrified in the expectation of an unpleasant incident."

Though numbers beyond elementary schools continued modest, thirty or forty years before 1914 established education as a growth industry: for good political reasons (even the hesitant affirmation of women's right to education benefited from the competition of rival political forces), but for demographic and economic reasons too. In the second half of the nineteenth century, progress in surgery and obstetrics stemmed the tide of infant mortality which had long swung between 1 in 3 and 1 in 4. By 1900, "only" 16 per cent of children died in their first year, and as the massacre of innocents grew less, parental affection and human interest began to focus on little things no longer likely to self-destruct at any moment. This need to put children out to work at an early age, sometimes at four according to Villermé in 1837, also grew less; and facilities for guarding poor children (*crèches*, *écoles maternelles*) improved in the 1880s, altering a situation where the dangers faced by the six or seven-year-old left alone in street or home could make putting out to work appear a lesser evil.

What did not change much was the putting out of babies and of older children by those who could afford it, and the consequent stultifying of affectivity evident in French literature, as in family relations. An old schoolmate of Jean Giraudoux remembers how, in the summer of 1895, at the end of their *rhinquême*, the two little boys left the prize-giving ceremony "weighed down with honours", and went out by the *parloir*, "thinking our parents were waiting. There was no member of our families..."

Relationships, or their absence, which may add to the mystery of public and private relations, also contribute a certain poignancy to relations between teachers and students, which from one of the more intriguing themes of Thullier and Guiral's intriguing book. Of course their *vis quovidiennes* gives us the data and the anecdotes that we have grown to expect from that excellent series. But one major theme of our authors is the knotty encounter of teacher and student, the difficulty of determining the teacher's strategy, let alone his true feelings about his arduous role. They consider the principles and practices of secondary teaching to have changed little between 1870 and 1950, demonstrate that the *professeurs* of 1880, 1900 and 1920 lived in a world of moral and didactic certainties, imbibed from masters of even earlier generations, and feel that these only ebbed as the teacher's position as a minor local notable declined to that of a mere functionary in an undifferentiated administration. (What would they say of today's situation when, in *France* and university alike, overqualified teachers teach underqualified students, with the few best set apart in *grandes Ecoles* and their classes *préparatoires*?) They make it clear, however, that the decline was not too steep from the stiff,

Finding our rightful place

Geoffrey Sampson

PETER CALVERT
The Concept of Class: An historical
introduction
254pp. Hutchinson. £12 (paperback,
£5.50).
0 09 146670 9

There is no denying the central role played by the concept of "class" in modern political thought: people have been urged to make war in its name. Yet the idea seems a vague one. Does class membership depend on one's source of income (wages, profits or rents) or on its quantity? Is it a matter of one's way of life? *Times* versus *Star*, rugged versus soccer? Can classes be endlessly subdivided like the colours of the rainbow, or is there some fixed number of them - and, if so, how many? Is class an objective category? - even in Communist China, where class membership really matters, the sympathetic observer Joan Robinson has claimed that "Class is defined by a state of mind".

Notoriously, the leading class-warrior failed to answer these questions in a systematic fashion. Marx's *Capital* breaks off just as the author is about to embark on a theory of class. If history is to be analysed as a war between the classes, it seems to follow that there should be a fixed number of discrete classes; yet Marx frequently assimilated those who live from profits and those who live from rents as "bourgeoisie", and identified subdivisions within classes - "petty bourgeoisie", "lumpenproletariat". Marx had no need to resolve the conflict between class defined by source of income and class defined by way of life, since he believed that culture was a "superstructure" determined by the underlying economic base; but others who do not share Marx's economic determinism have left this distinction equally vague.

Peter Calvert's book is a welcome guide to the changing uses of "class" as

a social and political concept. Originally the word referred to legally established divisions of Roman society, and Calvert devotes a chapter to the various class-like systems of grouping found in the societies of ancient Greece, Rome and medieval Christendom. The word *classe* was first applied to contemporary society by French economists of the physiocratic school in the 1750s, and Calvert sees this usage as a by-product of the eighteenth-century interest in the classification of biological species. At that time, the plant and animal kingdoms were still perceived in terms of a Great Chain of Being stretching linearly from lower to higher, rather than in terms of Darwin's ramifying tree-structure, of speciation, which places all contemporary forms on the same level of superiority in relation to their less evolved remote ancestors. This, perhaps, is why we inherit a notion of "class" that encourages men to envy those they see as located "higher" on the social ladder, rather than to feel thankful that the progressive division of labour has offered them a more attractive range of life-options than were available to their forefathers. But the history of the word is complex: Calvert points out that it was only after it had been borrowed from French, to English that the sense of class as a group of people sharing a similar relationship to the productive process came to be confused with the idea of political subordination and superordination.

The earlier part of Calvert's book is essentially an exercise in linguistic analysis, and serves a very useful purpose in enabling us to disentangle the hidden assumptions behind the use of "class" in eighteenth-century and early nineteenth-century thought. From Marx onwards, the writers Calvert discusses are more explicit about the status of "class" as a technical term. In their work, and it becomes harder for Calvert to stick to his declared intention of describing the meaning of the word rather than the use to which it is put as an explanatory device within various sociological theories. The latter half of the book shows signs of hasty writing, and parts

of it leave conceptual analysis behind altogether in favour of giving a history of the substantive development of twentieth-century Marxism. Calvert alludes, for instance, to the question whether Soviet bureaucracy is a new class unforeseen by Marx; he quotes two arguments that have been used to demonstrate that it is not - Trotsky's statement that "The individual bureaucrat cannot transmit to his heirs any rights in the exploitation of the state apparatus", and Frank Parkin's recent claim that Soviet bureaucracy has no distinctive culture, accent, or mode of dress - but, while questioning the factual truth of these premises, Calvert says nothing about what Trotsky's and Parkin's arguments imply for their understanding of the concept of class.

Calvert (who is no Marxist himself) at one point throws out the suggestion that by now the concept of class may be maintained in being solely by the efforts of academics. He notes that few people in modern non-communist societies fall squarely into either of Marx's polar categories of those who live from the profits of capital and those who lack capital. (One might add that for many twentieth-century economists, who understand the term "capital" as including far more phenomena than just money in the bank, the idea of an individual possessing no capital at all is meaningless.) It is clear that the distinctions between "middle" and "working" classes that Englishmen still care about are, in the technical usage of sociologists, distinctions of "status" rather than "class"; but Calvert suggests that there is no clarity left in the use of "class" as a technical term. Has it become simply redundant, then? Calvert believes not; instead, he argues that it has turned into what philosopher calls an "essentially contested concept" - the kind of word whose users cannot agree on a shared definition precisely because maintaining its definition is one of the ways they further their, diverse political goals. But clear thought is more important than politics. Peter Calvert concludes by urging that "class" is a prime candidate for verbal euthanasia.

UPPER 1.50

prim, forinal figure, ill-paid, ill-rewarded, ill-married, given to bouts of depression, accidie, and destructive self-criticism. Professors, as one of them insisted in *l'Oeuvre* of 1913, "are their own worst enemies... their indifference, apathy, slowness, cowardice, impotence and fear of action condemn them to be skinned, plucked, fleeced and exploited."

These whom could do so, escaped, to business, to public and private administrations, to banks, the foreign service, parliament, politics. Guirail and Thamer make the point that, unless they themselves become politicians, as so many have done, professors are not really political animals, but elitists too interested in talent selection and rational discourse to thrive in an unselective, egalitarian democracy that has little time for their educational ideals and little sympathy for their anarchistic allegiance to meritocracy. Yet, having said this, they conclude that the true inspiration and succour of our trade is pleasure: "retiens le mot joie" they say (and I agree). As I agree with Jules Renard advising the *lycéens* of Nevers, where he had once lived the life of Poil de Carotte: "Love your teachers blindly. You'll judge them later."

Back to the *Histoire générale*, whose Volume Four, in the competent hands of Antoine Prost, spends as many pages on the half-century since 1930 as the first three volumes on the century before. It isn't only the plodding

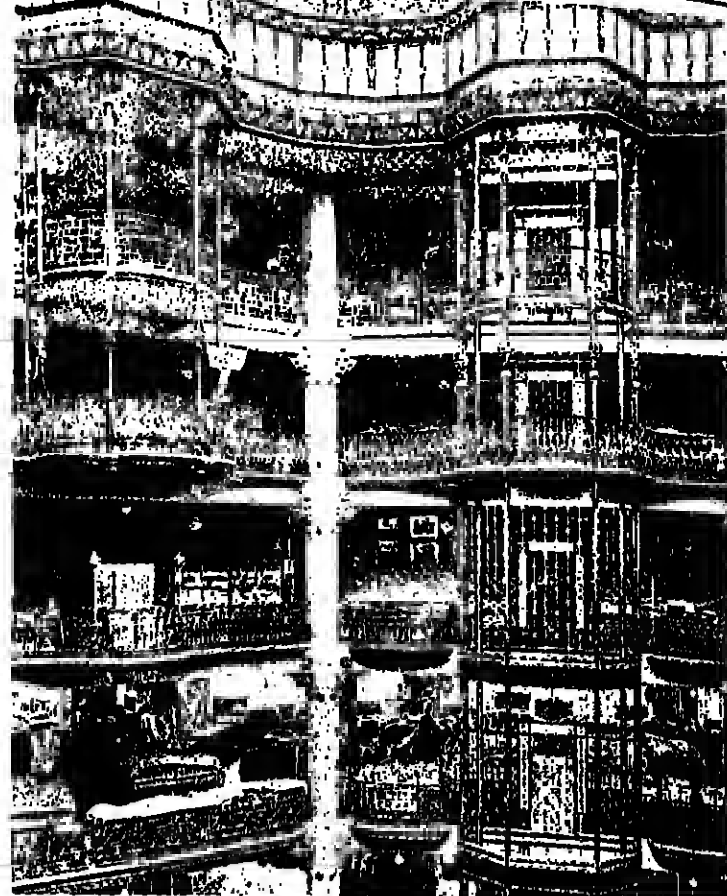
documentation, or our natural interest in contemporary goings-on: it is that, really, more has changed in a few decades than had over centuries. In 1913, all schools and universities, private and public, accounted for less than 5 million young people; by the late 1970s, these numbered 13.3 million. There were mere university students in 1978 than there had been secondary students in 1948. Most of the plant and personnel of France's four-year universities have been added in the past twenty years when, for a while, the education budget took up one third of public expenditure, as much as Defence and Health together, employing nearly a million persons to teach over 13 million more, marking all society with their rhythms (the calendar of school holidays) and their values (courses, diplomas).

When the scale is great enough, a change in quantity can mean a change in quality. The soaring scale of educational enterprise has meant an unprecedented degree of bureaucratization, formalization, *planning*, and end what is still called, contrary to all evidence, rationalization. The exceptional has become banal; its generalization has made for superficiality and, to a degree, devaluation. School has become a major machine for social, but not necessarily cultural, selection. A new illiteracy replaces the old or illiteracy behind the pretence of formal

instruction. In Victor Duruy's day, in the 1860s, one third of children attending elementary school left it not knowing, or hardly knowing, how to read or write. Why should things be much different now? We know that the number of illiterate conscripts has been on the rise since 1900 or so. The functionally illiterate may well inherit the earth. Why not? An early page of Volume Four carries a 1975 photograph of a school wall with a large inscription:

LYCÉE SINISTRÉ
FABRIQUE DE CHÔMEURS

As brief prosperity wanes, disinterested culture appears less exciting. But professional training can turn out almost as anodyne. Education that is long isn't necessarily high; let alone much of an education. The loss of a fixed intellectual capital on whose revenues one can live out one's life has gone the way of the economy that justified it. The struggle between tradition and novelty has itself become a slightly discredited tradition. The future which Western mankind briefly regarded as predictable, and almost surely better, now wears a darker hue. But if, indeed, general culture cannot teach us much today, at least it can console. And excellent volumes like these can place present experience in the rather unexpected perspective of a past where violence, illiteracy, misery, and disorder were all more so — the norm of everyday life.



Lifts not to be missed: in René Binet's Grand Hall added to the Grand Magasins du Printemps; a 1911 photograph reproduced in Rosalind H. Williams's *Dream Worlds*, reviewed below.

Compound existences

Richard Griffiths

MICHAEL SUTTON
Nationalism, Positivism and Catholicism
332pp. Cambridge University Press.
£21.22/\$26.95

"Les procédés d'argumentation régulière donnent l'illusion de la méthode scientifique. C'est un magnifique symptôme d'activité intellectuelle, mais il ne mène nulle part... Mauraas a résolu d'avancer le problème politique; avec sa ferme et douce insistance, il a l'air de raisonner librement; mais il n'a pas le droit de se laisser convaincre." Barrère's comment on Mauraas's political philosophy has elements of truth in it; what Michael Sutton's new study shows is, however, that for Mauraas, to the early stages at least, intellectual activity may have preceded the adoption of convictions.

The epousal by the Action Française of the cause of the Catholic Church in France at the time of the Separation of Church and State, and of the inventories, has often been seen as the cynical echo of a battleground which would attract to its side many from the beleaguered Catholic camp. After all, the Dreyfus Affair, which had been the original *raison d'être* of the movement, had run its course; the Action Française was seeking new causes and new alliances. Alongside the appeal to Catholics, in the period 1905-14, one finds two other tactics: one, a "social" policy of a radical nature, aimed at some kind of loose alliance with the syndicalists; the other, a concentration on foreign affairs and on the German threat. The war was to consecrate this second policy, and after it the Catholic and nationalist strains in Action Française policy, combined with an appeal to the property-owning classes, succeeded in consigning to oblivion the radical social stance of the pre-war period.

Was the appeal to Catholics, on the part of a movement headed by a self-confessed agnostic, pure opportunism? Mr Sutton convincingly shows that, in part at least, it was based on tendencies already present in Mauraas's thought. The young Mauraas, full of doubts in relation to his early Catholic upbringing, had, about 1890, "turned his back on any quest for inner metaphysical certainty and looked instead to some action-orientated idea of social or collective experience as a refuge from his own consciousness of being subject to determinism". Strangely, he found this refuge in a particular view of the Positivism of Auguste Comte. Comte's "subjective synthesis" had shown that "the coexistence and dignity of every individual being have always been due

to his subordination to some compound existence". Where Comte had chosen Humanity as his supreme collectivity, however, Mauraas substituted for it *la patrie*. As early as 1898, he had been calling for a political alliance between Positivists and Catholics (basing himself upon a wild idea put forward by Comte himself in his *Appel aux conservateurs*). From this perspective, developments in the pre-war period can perhaps be seen as part of a considered policy, and not merely as opportunism.

Is this the whole truth, however? Sutton argues against Simon's view that "Mauraas cared nothing about the scientific sub-structure of Comte's system, borrowing only those of Comte's political, social and religious ideas that suited his purposes", on the grounds (a) that Mauraas's debt was far from limited to the occasional idea culled from Comte's system to serve already defined purposes; and (b) that this influence was "prior to the crystallization of his own political doctrine". There is some truth in both these statements, but against them could be set the fact (admitted by Sutton) that Mauraas's view of

Positivism was distorted in order to fit his own particular needs (the same needs that produced his nationalism), and that "what to fact he meant by Positivism appears to have amounted to little more than a person who... was disposed to eschew the temptation of individualism and to give a primacy in his life and thought to a past-orientated idea of France... that did not diverge widely... from Mauraas's own". The proposed alliance, moreover, was based mainly on shared hatreds, rather than on a real community of positive interests; above all, on an abiding distaste for individualism "in all its perverse manifestations".

Mauraas was concerned with the practicalities of politics, and to this extent, the positivist aspect of the proposed alliance was a justification rather than a reality. Once the real-life alliance existed, the need for theoretical justification became less urgent. Léon de Montesquiou, the leading Positivist of the Action Française, did indeed, as holder of the Chaire Auguste Comte, give lectures on Comte at the Institut d'Action Française, but only in 1906 and 1907. The attention of the rest of the

movement lay elsewhere.

One of the fascinations of this book, however, lies in its treatment of the theoretical argument as it was pursued in Catholic circles, and above all in the controversy between the Jesuit Descoqs and the religious philosophers, Maurice Blondel and Laberthonnière. This controversy is laid before us in all its detail. Beneath the theological and philosophical points, beneath the diverse use of authorities, one can see the differing attitudes of the protagonists themselves to the Church's role in a secular society. This debate tells us more about the Church than about the Action Française.

Mauraas himself, after his famous passage of arms with Mare Sangnier in 1904-5, did not participate in this further debate until its final stages. In 1912-13, his contribution was, as might be expected, simplistic and defensive; much of it was taken up with explanation and defence of certain of his earlier statements, whose anti-Christian import, pinpointed in the debate, he now wished to attenuate. The theological complexities of the theoretical debate were irrelevant to

him. As Sutton remarks: "Mauraas's irritable reaction... may very well have marked his fear that the Action Française's role in the nationalist revival... might be compromised by retrospective Catholic criticism of the nature of his defence of the Church some years earlier."

Practicalities were more important to Mauraas than theory, despite his claim for the "Intellectualism" of his movement. It is significant that the earlier disagreement with Sangnier had rapidly switched from an examination of the compatibility of Mauraas's Positivist ideas with Christianity, to the question of "the relevance of Sangnier's democratic aspirations to the current state of French society". Mr Sutton's excellent study of a debate which had, until now, lacked a proper critical examination, tells us a great deal about the tension between theory and practice in Mauraas, a tension caused by the fact that "the founding ideology of the Action Française was no solitary scholar's enquiry, but a limited discovery, but a real discovery, a journalist and polemicist who took up the ideas of his time and reshaped them to his own taste and purpose".

It is true that the dust-jacket asserts that the book is not merely intended for "historians of technology", students of modern cultural history, or economists and sociologists, but "above all [it] is addressed to ordinary consumers who, in an immediate, personal way feel the need for the clarification of values." Even so, the most ordinary of consumers will scarcely feel flattered by the low level of knowledge, intelligence, and imagination that these pages assume in the reader. Commonplace observations are subjected to laborious explanation, and the descriptions of "consumer lifestyles" are delivered in prose that comes perilously close to those of that popular historical romance, *This is a pity*, since Rosalind Williams does herself and her central chapters a substantial injustice.

She writes dismissively of "the risk to quantify aggregate 'consumer demand'", yet a major shortcoming of her account of "the consumer revolution" in the absence of any serious discussion of the material basis of the changes that made it possible. She is also handicapped by the limits of her knowledge of the broader intellectual movements to which her book is devoted. Her conclusions are, for example, based on a concluding panegyric on Gabriel Tarde's monodological version of "solidarity" ignores the fact that Gabriel Eliot and other writers had been saying much the same thing thirty years earlier.

RELIGION

First and lesser Intelligences

Julian Baldick

SHAHRUDDIN YAHYA
SUHRAWARDI
The Mystical and Visionary Treatises
Translated by W. M. Thackston, Jr.
118pp. Octagon Press. £7.50.
0 90360 95 2

This is a publication of considerable importance: the first readable English translation of the *Treatises* of the Persian prose literature, the symbolic narratives of Islam's most colourful and imaginative philosopher, the Iranian mystic Suhrawardi, martyred by Saladin in 1191 at the age of thirty-six. Unfortunately, while W. M. Thackston Jr's translation is usually faithful enough, his introduction, albeit serious in its meticulous attention to detail, is marred by confusion on a crucial point. Here elucidation of an aspect of doctrine not only proves essential to an understanding of the treatises themselves, standing in a necessary preliminary to examination of the circumstances surrounding Suhrawardi's execution, and a sharp contrast of traditions within Islam.

I must begin, however, by noting a minor error in the analysis of Treatise I. Suhrawardi's Persian translation of the well-known "Epistle of the Birds" by Avicenna (d 1037). Dr Thackston takes the king reached by the birds at the end of their journey to be the First or Universal Intelligence, the entity nearest to God in Avicenna and Suhrawardi's systems. But the king must be God, as is shown by the parallel descriptions in Avicenna's *Revelation of Hayy ibn Yaqzan*, where the context permits no doubt. Here confusion may have been caused by the fact that the bird reaches one mountain before traversing eight more, so that the mountains symbolize all plane heavens, not just eight as Thackston states.

But it is in the analysis of Suhrawardi's original compositions that the major confusion appears. In Treatise IV, "A Day with a Group of Sufis", the author shows himself slitting with members of the main mystical movement within Islam, Sufism. Everyone present speaks of his "master". Probably, in the narrator's case, this is Gabriel again; in the philosophical school of "Oriental Illumination" founded by Suhrawardi the Tenth Intelligence is the guide, as opposed to the living, human masters of the Sufis. In Treatise V, "On the State of Childhood", Gabriel is recognizable again, as "an old man wearing an ibriqat, dark, half black, which was white and half black". That this is Gabriel is clear from the parallel

descriptions in Treatises II and III, where he is depicted as turned on one side towards light, and on the other towards darkness. In Treatise VI, "On the Reality of Love", we encounter a "young old man" called "Eternal Wisdom". Again Thackston makes an identification with the First Intelligence. This is impossible, because the figure stands before a city above which are several other cities: one cannot encounter the Highest Intelligence at this lower level. Here the figure must be the Tenth Intelligence again, in a different perspective: he appears "above" the nine heavens, not in a physical sense, but as the lowest figure encountered when one transfers to a superior world. Treatise IX, "A Tale of Occidental Exile", shows the visionary ascending to his "father". Thackston translates mutually contradictory glosses explaining the "father" as "Universal Intellect" and "Universal Soul". These explanations are also equally impossible, since the "father" speaks of his own father and other ancestors. Elsewhere in his works Suhrawardi presents the Tenth Intelligence as "our father" and "the holy father", being the "Lord of the Human Species". The presence of the Water of Life at the level of the narrator's "father" and at that of the "young old man" in Treatise VI shows that they are the same.

All this was amply demonstrated, with overwhelming arguments and easily verified documentation and references, by the late Henry Corbin, in the rich analyses accompanying his French translations of these treatises (*L'Arche impériale*, 1976). One must, however, admit that Corbin's highly individualistic style and technical vocabulary make his work extremely difficult for most readers to follow.

Thackston's conclusions concerning Suhrawardi's martyrdom sound conventional enough: he imputes it to "the wrath of the orthodox *ulama* [Doctors of the Law], for whom his ambassador, wrote the martyred al-Falla [Sho Sufi, d 922] before him, represented a dangerous espousal of

immediate cognition of God, a doctrine they were not prepared to accept". If we explore more deeply, however, we observe that Sufism, with its doctrine of immediate cognition of God as central to its theory and practice, was extremely acceptable at this time. The reigning caliph, al-Nasir (1183-1225), the religious leader of Islam in Baghdad, was soon to use Sufism as part of his effort to revive the caliphate's influence. One Sufi leader became the caliph's principal propagandist and arbiter for the Muslim world. What was entirely unacceptable was the philosophical tradition, to which Suhrawardi belonged. This tradition, as we have seen, emphasized not an immediate cognition of God, but a cognition strongly mediated by the Tenth Intelligence. In Sufism, on the other hand, the Sufi master is on the level of the First, Universal Intelligence; thus he can commune with God without mediation. It is perhaps this Sufi emphasis on the Universal Intelligence that accounts for the confusion noted above.

Thackston's statement that "one cannot say of these two intellectual orientations that the one is foreign to the other" is also conventional enough, and would command widespread assent; but we must continue to look at the background. To be sure, Sufism was heavily indebted to the Greek philosophical tradition for its ideas, and some writers, like Suhrawardi himself, could write in both disciplines (Treatises VII and VIII contain plenty of Sufi content, specifically presented as such) or attempt a synthesis. But to the majority of Sufis philosophy was literally foreign because it was Greek, and they would savagely mock the philosophers as purveyors of Greek ideas alien to Islam. This is a constant theme of the Sufi poetry of the period. They would also mock the philosophers for concentrating their efforts on the Active Intelligence instead of God. The caliph's Sufi ambassador, wrote a book against Greek philosophy and personally obliterated ten volumes of Avicenna's

works. The caliph's own hostility was notorious: in 1192, in Baghdad, a public inquisition burned a collection of philosophical books. If we turn to Syria, where Saladin reigned as temporal ruler while professing allegiance to the caliph as the highest religious authority, we find that too devoted philosophers, but would shower a Sufi visitor with gifts.

Moreover, Suhrawardi's opponents in Aleppo, the Doctors of the Law who asked Saladin to order his execution, would have been most offended by his claim to be instructed by Gabriel. For in Islam Gabriel is the Angel of Revelation, and revelation is held to have ended with Muhammad. A contemporary source records that the jurists condemned Suhrawardi for insisting on God's power to create a prophet at will, and for claiming to be "assisted" by the "World of Sovereignty"; his own works show him attributing such "assistance" to Gabriel. His adoring biographer, Shahrazari (d 1280), whose account is translated by Thackston, says that he had heard false reports that Suhrawardi knew the mysterious science called *simiya*. This is not "alchemy" (*al-kimya*), but means here, as in other biographical sources, the production of visual illusions. Shahrazari also says that he has heard that some of Suhrawardi's disciples called him "Messenger of God" (scandalous, if true — this is replaced in the translation by what seems an unconvincing reconstruction of the text).

It should also be mentioned that Suhrawardi's glorification of ancient Iranian kings in a treatise dedicated to an Anatolian prince, a work available to his accusers, would have shown the Doctors of the Law their habitual enemy: the Persian monarchical tradition, presented by an adviser to temporal rulers. But here further elaboration is unnecessary. The strictures I have made are not to be taken as reflecting upon the quality of the rest of the volume. Dr Thackston deserves our gratitude for an extremely useful and well-annotated translation.

Sceptical believer

Barbara Godlee

LESZEK KOLAKOWSKI
Religion
225pp. Oxford University Press.
£9.50 (paperback, Fontana. £2.50).
0 19 520372 0

Recently described as among the "Christian ohne Kirche, Sozialist ohne Partei", Leszek Kolakowski was born in Poland (1927), expelled from the Communist Party (1960), and from Warsaw University (1968), taught philosophy in America, then moved to All Souls, Oxford (1970). Author of the three-volume *Main Currents of Marxism* (1978) and now professing disenchantment with Marxist ideology, his earlier interest in "unsuccessful radicalism" is again taking over the centre of his stage: the studies which he produced his major work *Christians and Agnostics: in conscience religious and in fact confessional ou XVIIe siècle* (1964).

A determination to stick to his opinion whatever happens has thus brought Kolakowski considerable personal distress; but his irony will doubtless see him through even worse perils: such as being described as "a truly tragic philosopher who does not surrender to despair", and if you have certain hopes for ironical speculation on intractable religious questions then he is your man. His Mastergrade is by no means a historical tour round an often jaw-droppingly slow subject; not in it a simple account of Comparative Religion; while the subtitle — "If there is no God... On God, the Devil, Sin and other Worries of the so-called Philosophy of Religion" — recalls the wordy wrangles of Kolakowski's own seventeenth century. At once, the reader is engaged with cosmos and chaos: questions capable of long discussion without being precisely answered; for, like Pascal, Kolakowski

prefers to "aludate the status quoestiones", at the same time offering the stock apology that he is never sure what religion, let alone philosophy, really is.

Kolakowski's sometimes elegant, sometimes dense conceptual course spills over into ambitious paragraphs concerning the dialectic between sacred and profane; Morality, Mysticism and God, versus World, Flesh and Devil; so that whatever the reader's current state of faith, the attention is immediately caught by Abelard; Adjukelewicz, K.; Alcaraz, Pedro Ruiz de; Animate; St Antony of Padua; St Augustine and Aristotle; and that's just for the letter A. It transpires that Christ, J. hasn't received an index entry, but this is a slip: he is certainly mentioned on page 168. Kolakowski's route may seem a little out of repair in terms of contemporary philosophical debate, cambered towards the rambling side on such matters as theology, truth-claims and taboo. Generalities apart, it may seem a little old-hat to get too excited over whether belief in God is a rational possibility; or whether, without it, morality itself has become an outdated concept. But then Kolakowski's slant has always been towards old-fashioned wisdom "in the somewhat unmodern sense of being concerned with the traditional large questions of philosophy" of his little encompassing preface. It is his little certain hope for broad perspectives. There his emphasis on belief rather than ritual helps dispel some of the but air of anthropological theories that people rarely have the faintest idea what they are up to, in questions of worship: "certain arbitrary and contestable philosophical assumptions". He goes further, discussing conceptual networks, cognitive values and even the murky area between ontology and epistemology. In the shallow assumption that what people mean in religious discourse is what they ostensibly mean, a seemingly

ingenuous statement which should cause many a graduate seminar to raise or threatened corporate eyebrow. But Kolakowski also conserves; and his predilection for by-roads, especially in a central chapter called "Ood of Mystics. Eros in Religion", could lead to useful investigation of some neglected topics.

Now that he has apparently lacked his way out of the Marxist forest, will Kolakowski's rather doom-laden stoicism enlighten: more domestic fields? Religious activity of any sort in Britain is often considered less a morbid trait than a congenital weakness; while tendencies towards "orthodoxy" were once castigated as "peculiarly unnerving to the Constitution". In spite of the because of this, optimistic advances followed by the diluted accommodation of dissecting concepts seem to litter our history books. Kolakowski, a guide who has had a great deal to put up with over the past fifty-five years, and who may still be able to put fresh heart into those floundering about in often hostile terrain, would probably be unimpressed with accepted religious interpretations; for however often religious symbolism is borrowed to reinforce secular values, in his view it remains irreducible and *not* generally, continually experienced, whether God is thought to be alive or dead.

Saints Anthony of Padua (June 13) and Augustine of Hippo (August 28) — along with Augustine, the converter of the Kentish Saxons (May 26) — are among the four hundred odd, and older, saints, martyrs and festivals celebrated both for their human quirks and their Christian significance by Paul Jennings in *A Feast of Days: A Saint and a Diary Extract for Every Day of the Year* (278pp. Macdonald, £8.95). 0 355 07901 3. St. Kilvert, Peeps and Florence Walpole are among over one hundred darts from whom an extract, mad, memorable, or moving is taken; so too are Lewis Carroll, Stalin and Hugo Wolf.

Re-reading Jane

The memorial to Jane Austen in Winchester Cathedral reads, in part, as follows: "The benevolence of her heart, the sweetness of her temper, and the extraordinary endowments of her mind, abated the regard of all who knew her and the warmest love of her intimate connections." No mention is made of her novels.

To women in contemporary voice and dislocation. She is closely invisible, almost an annoyance. Why do we turn to her sampler squares for solace? Nothing she saw was free of snobbery or class. Yet the needlework of those needle eyes... We are pricked to tears by the justice of her violence: Emma on Box Hill, rude to poor Miss Bates. By Mr. Knightley's Were she your equal in situation — But consider how far this is from being the case. Shamed into compassion, and in shame, a grace.

Or wicked Wickham and selfish pretty Willoughby. Their vice, pure avarice which, displacing love. Defiled the honour marriages should be made of. She punished them with very silly wives. Novels of manners? Hymenal theology! Six little circles of hell with attendant humours. For what do we live but to make sport for our neighbours. And laugh at them in our turn? The philosophy. Faded at the door of Mr. Bennett's century. The Garden of Eden goes on in the grounds of Pemberley.

The amazing epitaph's 'benevolence of heart' Precedes 'the extraordinary endowments of her mind'. And would have pleased her, who was not unkind. Dear votary of order, sense, clear art. And irresistible fun, please pluck our lives. Outside self-pity, we have wrapped them in. And show us how, absurd we seem to you. You know the mischief poetry could do. And when Anne Elliot spoke of *the misfortune* To be seldom safely enjoyed by those who Enjoyed it completely, the spoke for you.

Anne Stevenson

Uniformity achieved

Claire Cross

NORMAN L. JONES

Path by Statute: Parliament and the Settlement of Religion, 1559
245pp. Royal Historical Society.
£17.50 (£10.62 to members).
0901050 84 9

In an article in the *English Historical Review* in 1950, and in the first volume of *Elizabeth I and her Parliaments* published three years later, Sir John Neale set out his famous hypothesis on the Elizabethan religious settlement. He believed that in 1559 the Queen, hesitant to proclaim England a Protestant nation with the country still at war with France, intended merely to gain parliamentary recognition of the royal supremacy and hold over any substantial changes in religious practice until later in the reign. Consequently, she planned to dissolve Parliament as soon as consent had been given to the new Act of Supremacy. The improvement of the International situation in March, however, brought about by the signing of the peace of Cateau-Cambrésis, caused her to stay her hand and at the eleventh hour to agree to Parliament's reassembling after Easter. In the meantime, authorizing a committee of divines to meet to prepare a new Protestant form of service. Himself favouring the conservative Prayer Book of 1549 in the face of concerted pressure from these theologians and their allies in the House of Commons, the Queen

capitulated and reluctantly accepted an only slightly modified version of the 1552 Prayer Book in order to obtain the cooperation of the senior clergy of the church. The settlement, therefore, was from the start a disappointment both for Elizabeth and for her more Protestant subjects, and from this crucial initial confrontation Parliament went on to provide an arena for religious conflict for the remainder of the century. Through its sheer originality, what Neale had here offered as no more than conjecture rapidly came to be regarded as the definitive explanation of what had in fact happened.

Now the wheel has turned full circle. In this important revisionary study an American scholar has subjected every stage in Neale's argument to detailed scrutiny, found positive confirmation lacking and concluded that the thesis cannot stand. In its place Norman Jones maintains that the Elizabethan government from the very beginning wanted a complete religious settlement in 1559. Since from the end of 1558 the Queen and her advisers assumed peace with France to be virtually certain, they enjoyed considerably greater freedom of action in foreign policy than Neale supposed. Within the realm there were indeed serious obstacles in Parliament, not, however, from obstreperous Protestants in the Commons but from the Catholic bishops and some of the lay peers in the Lords. At the first time of asking the lords temporal, though not the lords spiritual, acquiesced in the renunciation of the Pope's sovereignty, but balked at any major

alterations in Catholic worship. Presented with the very real possibility of failing to secure any uniformity in religion that session, and fearing the social anarchy which might then ensue, the government resolved to make a second attempt to gain a parliamentary settlement. First, in the Easter recess it arranged a theological disputation, ensuring victory for the Protestant side. Then, with some of the most vociferous Catholic prelates in prison on a charge of treason and others discouraged from resuming their seats, it introduced into the Lords a Uniformity Bill based on the 1552 Prayer Book. With all the bishops dissenting it passed by the margin of three votes. Elizabeth and Cecil had obtained their religious settlement in 1559, but by a hair's breadth.

In many respects Professor Jones has returned to the older interpretations of the events of 1559 put forward by Maitland, Gee and Froude, indeed by Strype and Foxe. His reformulation of the evidence means it will never again be possible to see in the early Elizabethan period an organized Puritan opposition party deliberately frustrating government policy. Perhaps, however, his main contribution to the history of the settlement lies elsewhere. Religion, he asserts, did not preoccupy the minds of parliamentarians in 1559 to the exclusion of all other business. By uncovering the concern of so many members of both Houses with their rights as the new owners of former church lands Professor Jones has demonstrated the strength of material as well as ideological motivation in the first Parliament of Elizabeth I.

Through average eyes

K. H. D. Haley

LODEWJCK HUYGONS

The English Journal, 1651-1652
Edited and translated by A. G. H. Bachrach and R. G. Collmer
319pp. Leiden: Brill/Leiden University Press.
90 04 06858 9

The writer of this travel journal came from one of the most notable families in the Netherlands of the seventeenth century. His father, the long-lived Constantijn Huygens (1596-1687), was a celebrated poet, with a wide range of literary, musical and artistic interests, and the secretary of Frederick Henry, William II and William III. His brother, Christiaan, came to enjoy a wider international reputation for scientific discoveries ranging from pendulum clocks to the rings of Saturn. Another brother, a younger Constantijn, also became secretary to William III in 1672, and kept a campaign journal which has recently been usefully revalued in the catalogue to an exhibition of his amateur drawings (in Amsterdam until the end of February, and Ghent from March 5 to May 8).

The twenty-year-old Lodewijk's observations of his journey to England from December 1651 to July 1652 are therefore of interest to us. His father had secured for him a place with the Dutch embassy which came to London to try to avert the first Anglo-Dutch war. The calculation was that this would be a useful training, not least because the elder Constantijn had made many friends in his own three trips to England (of which A. G. H. Bachrach has previously written) and Lodewijk was constantly meeting people who remembered him.

Curiousity, though Queen Elizabeth's signature had by then disappeared from the window-panes at Woodstock, Lodewijk found his father's autograph, written where he too had been shown the Queen's room thirty-four years earlier.

For five weeks he travelled to the South-West and South Wales, showing a tourist's curiosity. Two days cover a visit to St Mary's, Redcliffe, a cockpit which cost the town hundreds of pounds and which the many people named and carefully identified in editorial notes scarcely come to life, but there is a glimpse of Thomas Hobbes, dressed "in the French manner" with a long drawing-gown and praising brother Christian's first mathematical book; and there is a splendid Danish ambassador, actually called Rosencrantz, with a ribbon at each end of his moustache. Hobbes were much in favour; Hugh Peters provided sausages "bound together by all kinds of ribbons".

The whole is impeccably translated and produced, with Dutch and French originals for good measure, by editors who have done well to spare Lodewijk from obscurity without making him out to be a genius.

attention had been given, for example, to agrarian change and the way that affected the town's prosperity. The role of women and the status of family life are also relatively neglected, although domestic service employed more people than any other single occupation, we are told little of the servants' work, where they were recruited, and for whom they worked.

Nevertheless, these are plain glimpses and overall Trinder has provided a valuable case study of a market town whose inhabitants, at a time of the early and mid-Victorian years, appear to have been extremely dispirited, and whose political preoccupations seemed to consist of what the author calls "labyrinthine parochial rivalries". The interest of the book is enhanced by the illustrations of many of them provided from the author's own collection.

In *Church Langton and Willingham* (151pp, Sycamore Press, Leicester, £3.50, 0 908837 0 0) Canon John Prother has drawn on the writings of the Rev. John Hanbury, to provide a portrait of the man and of rural Leicestershire under George III.

If the journal is a little colourless as a result, it must also be said that it adds little that is new to our knowledge of diplomatic history, other than its description of the formality of the ambassadors' reception. He has embassy arrands but had little inside knowledge and makes no penetrating comment on the internal political situation. Perhaps because many of his father's friends were courtiers and Orangists were pro-Stuart (though he also met Hugh Peters at the embassy), he records in-signs which said "He was the King's Head" and bystanders who called out to the ambassador "Remember our poor king" and "God bless you, if you go to meet with our King Charles". But the journal's real interest is as a rare record of what a foreign visitor to the shores actually saw; for a foreign visitor what was different from social conventions at home in the Netherlands.

Ha ooted the dirt and grime in English public buildings, a Westminster Hall, the Abbey and St Paul's; that "in line with the English custom" the ambassadors were not given the opportunity to wash their hands before dinner but only after the table had been cleared; that at Gray's Inn the gentlemen had neither napkins nor table-napkins. He could barely find a seat to hear Archbishop Usher preach, "an old grey man of about eighty years", and had to pay the privilege; and people stood transcribing the sermons. He noted that sabbatarianism was much more severe in England, with not a single carriage in the street on Sundays, and little attention paid to the prohibition on celebrating Christmas; while many people were to be seen going to mass in the Spanish ambassador's or Saturday. A pair of ours took him to most of his visits; and a great number of Royalists gathered to attend a ball performance but were disappointed because Cromwell's promised protection did not arrive.

For five weeks he travelled to the South-West and South Wales, showing a tourist's curiosity. Two days cover a visit to St Mary's, Redcliffe, a cockpit which cost the town hundreds of pounds and which the many people named and carefully identified in editorial notes scarcely come to life, but there is a glimpse of Thomas Hobbes, dressed "in the French manner" with a long drawing-gown and praising brother Christian's first mathematical book; and there is a splendid Danish ambassador, actually called Rosencrantz, with a ribbon at each end of his moustache. Hobbes were much in favour; Hugh Peters provided sausages "bound together by all kinds of ribbons".

The whole is impeccably translated and produced, with Dutch and French originals for good measure, by editors who have done well to spare Lodewijk from obscurity without making him out to be a genius.

attention had been given, for example, to agrarian change and the way that affected the town's prosperity. The role of women and the status of family life are also relatively neglected, although domestic service employed more people than any other single occupation, we are told little of the servants' work, where they were recruited, and for whom they worked.

Nevertheless, these are plain glimpses and overall Trinder has provided a valuable case study of a market town whose inhabitants, at a time of the early and mid-Victorian years, appear to have been extremely dispirited, and whose political preoccupations seemed to consist of what the author calls "labyrinthine parochial rivalries". The interest of the book is enhanced by the illustrations of many of them provided from the author's own collection.

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GERMAN FICTION

Dog days in Vienna

David McLintock

THOMAS BERNHARD

Beim
210pp, Frankfurt: Suhrkamp.
3 518 02149 4

Over the past eighteen years Thomas Bernhard has become Austria's leading writer of fiction, specializing in what one critic has called "the black idyll", a degradation set in rural Austria, and admired for what another has called the "perfidiously perfect syntactical construction" of his prose. His heroes are often men of means who are physically ill and mentally deranged, living on their estates, devoting themselves to their intellectual obsessions and brooding angrily on the absurdity of life.

One such is Rudolf, the hero of *Beim*, a middle-aged man who suffers from senility and has retired to the country, severing all his social contacts. He has spent years assembling material for a study of Mendelssohn but he finds himself incapable of sitting long to write and blames this on the debilitating influence of his domineering sister (who has just been staying with him), a Viennese socialite with a keen business sense whose life he despises and whom he turns despises him for his frailty and self-destructiveness. She has left Rudolf in a state of utter demoralization, which he describes at length (like most of Bernhard's fiction, this is a first-person narrative with a minimal narrative framework in the first and last sentences). After much vacillation Rudolf decides to take a holiday in Palma, where he finds himself obsessed by the memory of a young widow, Anna Härdt, whom he had met on his last visit there, eighteen months earlier, and who had told him the shattering story of her life. (It is to the events in her story that the "concrete" of the title refers.) Rudolf is "compelled" to discover what has happened to her in the meantime and, having done so, he takes several sleeping tablets and sleeps for twenty-

six hours, but wakes up in a state of extreme anxiety. Instead of writing his study of Mendelssohn he writes *Beim*.

The book consists of one enormous paragraph (Bernhard gave up indentation long ago), most of it taken up with Rudolf's reflections on human nature and the human predicament, and especially on the stupidity, coarseness, rapacity and hypocrisy he finds everywhere in Austria, which he calls the stinking public lavatory of Europe. He vituperates against Austrian religious and political institutions and against the philistinism and vulgarity of his compatriots. Even Vienna, the city to which he owes his love of music, he finds repellent, observing that the great conductors of the past have turned into "crude sensation-seeking animal tamers" (can this be a swipe at the great Herbert?). Like all obsessives Rudolf gets hold of an idea and shakes it violently, worrying it, reformulating it, reducing it to the absurd, and then dropping it. The recollection, for instance, that his own family used to keep a dog sets him off on a long diatribe against dog-lovers, who are even blamed for starting wars. In the course of it he comes to speak of Schopenhauer:

Die Leute haben einen Hund und sind von diesem Hund beherrscht und selbst Schopenhauer ist letztendlich nicht von seinem Kopf, sondern in Wahrheit von seinem Hund beherrscht gewesen. Diese Tatsache ist deprimierender als jede andere. Im Grunde bestimmte nicht der Kopf Schopenhauers dessen Denken, sondern der Kopf hat Schopenhauers Welt gehabt, sondern der Hund Schopenhauers. Ich muß nicht warnend sein, um zu behaupten, Schopenhauer habe einen Hund auf gehabt, keinen Kopf. People keep a dog and are ruled by this dog; even Schopenhauer was in the end ruled not by his head, but by his dog. This fact is more depressing than any other. Fundamentally it was not Schopenhauer's head that determined his thought, but Schopenhauer's dog. It was not the

head that ruled Schopenhauer's world, but Schopenhauer's dog. I do not have to be demented to assert that Schopenhauer had a dog on his shoulders, not a head.

Yet these are not simply the ravings of a madman. Many of Rudolf's opinions echo those which Bernhard has expressed in his autobiographical writings. Bernhard uses his deranged heroes to voice his own indignation, because they can shout louder and are not inhibited by the rules of bienséance.

Even while we recognize the justice of some of Rudolf's attitudes, however, we sympathize with his suffering, if not with his self-pity, we are constantly reminded that he, unlike the unfortunate Anna Härdt, is a privileged member of the society he despises. It is not hard to agree with his sister that his wounds, however real, are partly self-inflicted. His friends in Palma live in a palace, and while he stays in the most luxurious hotel, Anna is put up in the most squalid peopled by German old-age pensioners sent there by their families to die. The world is full of errors and suffering is universal:

Die Frage ist eigentlich nur, wie wir möglichst schmerzfrei durch den Winter überstehen. Und das noch viel grausamer Frühjahr. Und den Sommer haben wir immer gehabt. Der Herbst bringt uns dann wieder um alles.

The question is really only how we are to survive the winter as painlessly as possible. And the much crueler spring. And summer we have always had. Then autumn takes everything away from us again. The privileged can survive, if they have the will, by exploiting the system as Rudolf's sister does, or by dropping out and living on pills like Rudolf himself, but for the helpless millions like Anna Härdt, whose tragedy occupies the last part of the book, there is no hope of being rescued from indignity and degradation. *Beim* is so bleak and despairing a indictment of our society and of the human nature that created it.

shock tactics

Jeremy Adler

FRANZ MON

fallen stellen: texte aus mehr als elf jahren
132pp, Klaus Ramm.
3 921917 12 3

We need books, remarked Kafka, "which bite and sting", *fallen stellen* is a book like that, a book which "places traps" for the reader. The traps are "texts from more than eleven years", making this a sequel to Franz Mon's basic "reader", his revised *Lesbuch* of 1972. Once again he triumphantly demonstrates that experimental writing is very much alive, and still able to startle, to delight, and to instruct; experience here becomes a vehicle of knowledge for the reader as much as for the author. This entails various degrees of shock, ranging from surprise at grammatical oddities and inverted idioms in some pieces to the revulsion inspired by a morbid retelling of "Sleeping Beauty".

Mon has long exploited the potentials of textual variety in his books, while achieving nestlelike unfray. In *Orkulturan* (1959) he interspersed poetic texts with brief essays, connecting the concrete pieces with theoretical statements. In the original *Lesbuch* (1967) these gave way to shorter, more poetic reflections. *Fallen stellen* develops this technique with its nine miniature rectangles of print, the "word-tactics" 1-9, which establish the nine sections in the book; thus Mon invites the reader to tease meaning from the page, and (literally) to focus on his dominant concern: language. As before, Mon aims to correct linguistic abuse: "words ironed out, boxed into shape, out of many a twist and turn bent straight"; and more acutely than ever, he gives a sense of words as physical bodies. *Stellen* the words which lie on your tongue. In your mind. It is a technique of words, really guided fantasy, and the most faithful reaching of Mon's many surprise reversals.

Whereas the structure of *Orkulturan* mirrored a split into theory and practice typical of much experimental writing, such later texts treat the relation dialectically.

Many texts explore the tantalizing bond between language and memory; words become volatile, gently at times, sharply at others. In the following, Mon characteristically re-kindles a dead idiom, treating the metaphor literally: "where were you? / where should I be? on everyone's lips. / and did they like the taste? / could be some. / 'you say that so calmly. / of course, but they spit out the core' ... 'situations, I'".

The prose includes the finest pieces. Their forms range from "stories" or "events" such as "a word falls" through linked cycles, each section of which starts from the same narrative premise (as in "finger games"), to the formal exercises, like the thirty-three numbered paragraphs on "eyes", "gullivers travels", and "locus solus". Many carry the strategy of suggestion to an extreme: focusing almost microscopically on isolated details, on common gestures unusually observed, or on fantastically conceived actions, these texts, through their exact and lucid style, establish imaginary events so vividly that they compel the reader step by step to re-construct them in his mind. It is a technique of words, really guided fantasy, and the most faithful reaching of Mon's many surprise reversals.

At ground level

Ivan Roots

JOHN MORRILL (Editor)

Reactions to the English Civil War 1642-1649
257pp, Macmillan, £14 (paperback, £5.95).
0 333 27565 9

This is the third volume of the publisher's "Problems in Focus" series to be devoted to a decade when the world turned upside down - or did not. John Morrill's able team offers more or less revisionist views. "The Coming of War" by Anthony Fletcher depicts how, in the crisis of 1642, "untidily and haphazardly", but sometimes decisively, "the imperatives of local order" and "above all, concern for their lives, their property and the security of their immediate communities" rather than any remote national issues determined individual decisions. The upshot was, as we are increasingly aware, not sharp cleavage between confirmed Roundheads and dedicated Royalists but rather a spectrum in which natters, some apathetic, some positively antipathetic to all activists, were conspicuous. The communities involved were of course not simply topographical, but included groups social, economic, religious, cultural or whatever.

Ronald Hutton's "The Royalist War Effort" follows much the same line, pursuing localism not only in the initial line-up but throughout the war's course and consequences. He suggests that after 1646 settlement was inhibited by a continuing conflict between local populations and "the military" right through to 1660, when somehow "the regular soldiers" vanished. But really it was not the localism of, say, Booth's Riding, but brainwashed troops obedient to General Monck's commands who brought on that Restoration which took everybody, sootysayers and king alike, by surprise.

Roger Howell, too, scribbles around at ground-level - in the towns where he falls to find the urban radicalism of the "orthodox" view of Hobbes and Hill, Clarendon and Manning. Towns, rather, were so diverse in size, economy, administration and so on that "no model yet devised can contain them." Many "circumstantial" - the presence of a cathedral, the drive of an outstanding individual - might be crucial in determining an allegiance,

and in the words of Thomas Poyor no "city or corporation is so unanimous, that they have division enough to undo themselves". In the end Howell offers as "the only generalisation we can safely make" the observation that the urban response to civil war was both conservative and defensive, remaining so whatever the outside pressures. He notes the capacity to survive throughout of municipal officeholders, "remarkable", he says, but it was shared by civil servants, parliamentary officials, and all manner of functionaries, including clerical incumbents, whose fate is taken up by the editor himself.

Dr Morrill's "The Church of England" demonstrates from dry records like churchwardens' accounts how stubbornly "Anglican" a distinct from Puritan and Laudian attitudes and observances endured at parish level throughout the 1640s, owing little or nothing to the Martyr King himself or to the bishops, who, though they continued ordaining, could not in their enforced idleness produce even much routine devotional literature. The obstacles, among them inertia, which early modern governments found to getting legislation implemented, severely frustrated the parliamentary regimes in religion as in everything else. (The same thing occurred during the 1650s.) Morrill will surely clothe in his forthcoming *England's Wars of Religion* his claim that the triumph of Anglicanism was more certain than monarchy's because "after 80 years of maturation" it had "struck deep roots to the popular culture". For the partakers of that - Donald Pennington's "The People" - the wars were "an experience unlike anything they had known before", not because of "great issues of social revolution" but for their swift, though uneven, distribution of misery, fear, waste, and exhaustion. But like all war these had strange effects - economic disaster here, stimulus to prosperity there, Oxford, Charles's military and civil HQ, flourished for a while as an industrial and commercial centre. Armies on both sides could produce "ruination" but there is evidence that as the King's field efforts collapsed his troops were the more destructive. But Robert Ashton points out there was in general a transition "From Cavalier to Roundhead Tyranny" over the two decades from the Petition of Right, with Parliament and its ubiquitous committees extending so far from the rules of law and justice that the label "Eleven Years' Tyranny" can be more

applied slapped on 1642 to 1653 than on 1629 to 1640.

Two articles remain. Mark Kishlansky takes us confidently through what already seems familiar territory to search of the ideology of the New Model Army, and Richard Tuck goes some way towards elucidating the legal and historical arguments which sustained John Selden's oddly stubborn parliamentarianism. He concludes that if Selden's ideas did not "win" in 1649 or in 1660 they may yet have done in 1667, when Clarendon fell, or in 1688, when James II did. The suggestion that historians of legal and political philosophy should not break the back of the seventeenth century at 1660 but look both before and after is a sound one, applicable to every aspect of its history.

Two complaints: one, no account is taken of European reactions; two, the outlook is oddly parochial. The civil wars were not, in fact, "English". They embraced all the constituents of the British Isles. Only fitfully is there a hint here that what is under review was "the Wars of Three Kingdoms and a Principality".

Falling out in Oxon

Pamela Horn

BARRIE TRINDER

Victorian Banbury
235pp, Chichester: Phillimore.
£11.95.
0 85033 433 0

Barrie Trinder, as a founder-member of Banbury Historical Society and the author of a number of local history studies, is eminently well qualified to write a history of Banbury during the Victorian era. In *Victorian Banbury* he examines its importance as a marketing division within the community. These, as Trinder describes as "a kaleidoscope of bewildering patterns". And it is here, perhaps, that Trinder's wealth of detailed knowledge of Banbury proves something of a handicap: for it sometimes leads to lengthy descriptions of a very large number of communal disagreements on various political and religious topics which are likely to be of limited interest to non-Banburians. The book would have gained if this aspect had been somewhat curtailed and more

economic change are not ignored either, with the efforts made to improve living conditions through public health reform, a programme of school building, and the contributions of voluntary societies all carefully assessed. Leisure activities, too, are examined, and the town's proud record of public lectures and debates, concerts and theatrical entertainments is set against less reputable outbreaks of drunkenness and disorder. The Michaelmas Fair remained a peak in the town's recreational year.

But, despite this wide coverage, the book is concerned mainly with an analysis of political and religious divisions within the community. These, as Trinder describes as "a kaleidoscope of bewildering patterns". And it is here, perhaps, that Trinder's wealth of detailed knowledge of Banbury proves something of a handicap: for it sometimes leads to lengthy descriptions of a very large number of communal disagreements on various political and religious topics which are likely to be of limited interest to non-Banburians. The book would have gained if this aspect had been somewhat curtailed and more

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Silesia on its uppers

J. J. White

HORST BIENEK

Erde und Feuer
372pp, Munich: Carl Hanser.
3 446 13611 8

Erde und Feuer is the fourth, and by all accounts final novel of Horst Bienek's requiem for German Upper Silesia, a project which he began in 1975 with *Die erste Polka*. Just as the first novel concentrated on one particular day (August 31, 1939), so the next two, *Glocken* (1977) and *Zelt ohne Glocken* (1979) also operate within a limited timescale - focusing on September 4, 1939 and April 23, 1943 respectively. Although presenting a mixture of history and fiction, a vast mosaic of contemporary events, all three books centre on a religious celebration: a wedding, a funeral and Good Friday. *Erde und Feuer*, by contrast, as befits the larger theme of Upper Silesia's downfall and the epic westward trek of German refugees, covers a number of months, ending with the Soviet occupation of the province and the bombing of Dresden.

For a brief period at both the beginning and the end of the tetralogy, Gdansk (now Polish Gdansk) becomes a focal point of world history. In 1939 it is the setting for the stage-managed Polish attack on a German radio station (witnessed in *Die erste Polka*), an event which was to furnish the Nazis with a pretext for the invasion of Poland; and in the last novel, in the path of the massive Soviet offensive.

Whether this important industrial region will be faithfully defended by the Germans, now that the Rosts have suffered substantial damage, whether the Russians will try to preserve the

province intact to their own advantage, or whether Upper Silesia will suffer the same fate as the Germans meted out to many of the occupied Eastern territories, is shown whether to stay or flee, no conduct "business as usual" for as long as possible or lie low until it is all over - such are the central concerns of most of the characters. Only when the eerie columns of Auschwitz prisoners are seen being forced-marched westwards across the province and any final semblance of law and order begins to crumble in the absence of hastily escaping German functionaries, does it become clear that Upper Silesia is being abandoned.

Bienek's interest is essentially in his characters' attitude to their homeland - the "earth" of the novel's title - during the final months, weeks and hours of its existence. Rather than offering one further chronicle of the final débâcle, he is intent on reconstructing what it felt like at the time to be an Upper Silesian, and how people reacted to the end of their world.

While the novel does contain the occasional example of persecution, such as the fate of the servant-girl with a Russian prisoner, and we hear of sporadic acts of violence (the execution of deserters, the shooting of slave-labourers by their "liberators"), the sections concerning the bombing of Dresden. At eighty-three, the aged writer is hardly the most appropriate witness to this event. But then, this is partly the novel's point: for Hauptmann himself emphasises, in almost symbolic sense of helplessness and a feeling of having outlived his time.

Although the main strength of *Erde und Feuer*, as of the previous three novels, lies in Bienek's ability to reconstruct a vivid impression of his native province during the War, it does occasionally strain towards a recapitulatory effect or the uncomfortably monumental.

piece of soil." In a review of one of the earlier volumes, Heinrich Böll remarks that Bienek had succeeded in showing how separate and yet entirely Upper Silesia was from Silesia itself: the one industrial, the other rural, the one Catholic, the other Protestant. Few of the Upper Silesians we meet are confirmed Nazis, yet in their simplicity and almost mystical sense of suffering they are shown to offer Fascism little resistance.

Bienek has repeatedly stressed that he did not wish to introduce a strongly moralizing retrospective element into his account. But on two occasions *Erde und Feuer* comes perilously close to such a perspective. One is in the final paragraphs of the work, where Kotik Ossadnik, one of the few new characters to figure largely in this part of the tetralogy, launches into a still diatribe against "the Church for encouraging the Upper Silesians in their passivity. While Kotik's outburst bears the marks of "Nietzsche's *Zarathustra*, his principal literary debt bears the marks of Nietzsche's diagnosis of and prescription against the malaise the province has displayed in all four novels.

The other occasion on which Bienek has a somewhat uneasy recourse to pointed comment is in his use of Gerhard Hauptmann during the sections concerning the bombing of Dresden. At eighty-three, the aged writer is hardly the most appropriate witness to this event. But then, this is partly the novel's point: for Hauptmann himself emphasises, in almost symbolic sense of helplessness and a feeling of having outlived his time.

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Through the bars

Michael Hofmann

BIROTTA ARENS

Katzengold
222pp, Munich: Piper.
3 492 02787 3

Birotta Arens in *Katzengold* writes with something of the spirit-enlarging visio and fantasy of Gerda Mani. Her subject is nothing less than Germany in the twentieth century. It is part Bildungsroman, part marital family epic, part collage, part self-reflexive modernist fiction. It moves from the hardships of Lina's rickety childhood on a farm as one of eleven children, to her death and the social, political and literary maturity of her granddaughter; the narrative "in-between" comes a wealth of particulars and anecdotes, phantasmagorical images, irony and lyricism. There is Fritze Gerhage, the primary schoolmistress, with her two different eyes: the dark blue one that says, you know a lot already; and the light-blue one that says you still have a lot to learn. There is a wonderful description of Lina's wedding, and her friend Lene's

half jumps to his death. The local population has thus organized the area - new, and sole, "attraction". It is tempting to read *Der Turm* as a satire: the satisfaction of the tourist's desire for diversion at any price is taken to its macabre extreme. Yet *Der Turm* offers more than a pardonable view of stereotypical expectations. A psychological dimension is given by the choice of perspective; the first-person narrator brings home sharply the central characters' sense of claustrophobia and helplessness and the maze of anticipation and perplexity in which he is trapped, reflected in the novel's frequently labyrinthine prose.

emigration to America - departures for two Promised Lands. When the marriage proves sterile, physical disappointment, she remedies this by creating an imaginary husband.

These piecemeal retellings might suggest that *Katzengold* is a whimsical book, but this is not so. It is often at its most effective when darker incidents are seen in a child-like way: a Jewish butcher is beaten up and his shop wrecked; there is the casual murder of a woman in a block of flats; there are scenes of murder, rape, paedophilia, alcoholism. Arens evokes the slavery involved in the German "economic miracle" with a sequence describing the redoubling of production in a Kodak factory; with an aggressive business correspondence from a secretarial school; with the shuffling up and ultimately the complete disappearance of a blastfurnace worker after twenty-five years - only his heat-stiffened clothes remain. Arens often writes in brief, allusive sentences; she is not so much above her narrative as in the midst of it, already, and the light-blue one that says you still have a lot to learn. There is a wonderful description of Lina's wedding, and her friend Lene's

half jumps to his death. The local population has thus organized the area - new, and sole, "attraction". It is tempting to read *Der Turm* as a satire: the satisfaction of the tourist's desire for diversion at any price is taken to its macabre extreme. Yet *Der Turm* offers more than a pardonable view of stereotypical expectations. A psychological dimension is given by the choice of perspective; the first-person narrator brings home sharply the central characters' sense of claustrophobia and helplessness and the maze of anticipation and perplexity in which he is trapped, reflected in the novel's frequently labyrinthine prose.

Colin Russ